
THE UNCARVEN TIMBERS

• • Kennedy Williamson • •



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THE UNCARVEN TIMBERS

BY
KENNEDY WILLIAMSON

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HODDER AND STOUGHTON
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TO
TWO
IN A
MIDLAND MANSE

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THE DEAD LETTER OFFICE

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THE DEAD LETTER OFFICE

IN the British Postal Service there is an institution which not only performs an exceedingly useful purpose, but also has a certain picturesque quality that quickens the imagination. Thanks to it a letter that has failed to find its addressee is not destroyed, but in due course comes back to the sender.

Thus, the letter which a typist writes, at her employer's dictation, to the Countess of Ayr, is not destroyed when no such person can be found, but is returned to the sender, who then understands why he has had no acknowledgment from the County Surveyor. The missives that fail to be delivered in Oban are not flung into the western seas, but come back, inscribed "Not known at Oban; try Holborn," to the people of many aspirations but few aspirates who sent them forth.

It is oftentimes a very happy experience to

THE DEAD LETTER OFFICE

have a letter so returned. All the charming compliments and the fair speeches which were meant for your correspondent, now come back to yourself and you are conscious of their greater appropriateness. All the sparkling epigrams with which you garnished your letter come back to refresh you and to reassure you that men are mad who say that letter-writing is a lost art. The Dead Letter Office safeguards you and the world against irreparable loss. It means that the brilliant things that you have written will not pass into the void. If they fail to reach their destination, they come back all aglow to the hand that sent them forth.

In the higher walks of life how one wishes there were some similar arrangement, whereby good things that fail of their mark came back to the senders. But surely there is!—we have the warranty of Jesus for that very truth. There is a Dead Letter Office in the spiritual sphere.

When ye enter into a house, said Jesus,

THE DEAD LETTER OFFICE

salute it ; that is, give it your salutation. Now what was the salutation in the East ? “*Shalom l’ka*”—“Peace be upon thee.” It was often called just one’s “Peace.” When ye enter into a house, said Jesus, give it your “Peace,” and if the house be worthy, your “Peace” will come upon it. If it is not worthy, let your “Peace” return to you.

If the courtesy fails to find a heart to give it welcome, it will return to bless and sweeten the heart whence it came. If a kindness goes forth in yearning and its addressee is not courteous enough to accept it, then there is machinery to see that it gets safely back to the sender.

Even in Old Testament days the activity of the Dead Letter Office was known. In the thirty-fifth Psalm David tells us how he had been sore bestead by his enemies ; he had suffered calumny from false witnesses, who were harrying him with unwearying zeal. In the fulness of time evil befel these foes of his, and he seized the golden opportunity of

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returning good for ill. In their affliction he showed a kindly sympathy ; when they were sick, his clothing was sackcloth. He made one with them in their misfortune, but even so his enemies still harboured unrelenting hatred. Then said David " My prayer returned into mine own bosom."

He was conscious that the goodwill which had not been received by those for whom it had been intended had enriched his own heart. His impulse of brotherliness had not been poured into thin air. Like the dove that found no hospitable resting-place, it had returned again a-homing. His prayer returned again into his own bosom. In the world of spirit, that safeguard which performs the function of a Dead Letter Office had re-delivered the missive.

The Dead Letter Office is part of the Ministry of Conservation, whose function it is to safeguard vital and valuable things. Matter is such that you can rearrange its particles, but you cannot destroy any of it.

THE DEAD LETTER OFFICE

When Shelley makes the cloud say "I change but I cannot die," he is embodying a great scientific fact. In addition to the conservation of matter and the conservation of energy, this department undertakes the conservation of love, which is much more important. By this means the man who is courteous stands to gain in any event.

If the apostle said "*Shalom*" to a man, and he received the greeting, the apostle had won a friend and so was the gainer. If his greeting was rebuffed, then the spiritual warmth of his goodwill came back to his own heart.

If you greet the world with a smile, you are guaranteed both ways. You invest in a gilt-edged security. If people are bores and treat your courtesy with their own low-pitched standards, if they are not big enough to receive your greeting, if they are lacking in what George Eliot calls the "massive virtue of receptivity," then they are the losers, but you do not lose one volt of spiritual momentum. Do not imagine that your courtesy is being

THE DEAD LETTER OFFICE

lost. Remember the Ministry of Conservation. Your unaccepted messages will come back to you through the Dead Letter Office. They will make pleasant reading both now and at the Day of Judgment.

THE GAMBIT

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”—Matt. v. 5.

“Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him, lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge . . . and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.”

vv. 25, 26.

“If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee : for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.”—*v. 30.*

THE GAMBIT

THOSE of you who are chess players know what is meant by a gambit, and to those who are not, a word or two will be enough to make it clear. Sometimes in the early stages of a game a player will sacrifice a pawn in order to open up his attack and pave the way for victory. That deliberate act of enfeebling his forces with a view to subsequent strength is called a gambit. In the long history of chess, many of the masters have employed a particular gambit of their own devising, and their names have been handed down linked each with the gambit that he followed. Thus to-day we have the Evans Gambit, the Salvio Gambit, the Muzio Gambit, and maybe we shall live long enough to hear of a Capablanca Gambit. It is not, however, upon any of these, but

THE GAMBIT

upon the Jesus Gambit that I want to speak.

For He who is the acknowledged master in the great game which men call Life had His own particular method of opening the attack and of compassing a victory ; and the method, of which He made no secret, but which He commended with passionate earnestness to the world, involved a gambit. To make life a triumph, to achieve at least a checkmate, He counselled men to forgo something of their strength in such a way as later to hold the strong position—to sacrifice a pawn at the outset as the price of being victor in the end. This principle we find set forth time and again as the solvent of life's problem. In one chapter alone there are three statements of the Principle of the Gambit.

(I) At the very beginning of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus recounts certain classes of people as being subjects for congratulation, and one of these beatitudes is a case in point.

THE GAMBIT

Jesus has in mind the type of person who has a great and glorious aim, and will gladly make concessions in matters of lesser import, in order to achieve it. He has enough judgment to be able to assess relative values, and he is willing to forgo trifles. He is quite unlike those wearisome people who are for ever standing up for their rights, and who will not bate one jot of their just demands. The man of whom Jesus is thinking is persistent in his high endeavour, but patiently persistent; he is false to none of his principles, but he is a pleasant man to live with; he takes his stand without compromise, but he knows the difference between sweet reasonableness and mulish obstinacy. That's the type of man, said Jesus, who arrives; that's the man who achieves sovereignty in life; with that quiet smile of his he enters upon the freedom of all its boroughs; why, he inherits the earth! "I congratulate the quietly persistent," said Jesus, "for they shall inherit the earth." The really strong

THE GAMBIT

man can yield where forbearance demands it ; the lesser man is only strong enough to be stubborn. That's the vital distinction between meekness and weakness. "Meekness," in the Scriptural sense, belongs to the man who smiles quietly at petty annoyances, while other people are foaming at the mouth about fancied encroachments on their amour propre. The way to win on the chequerboard of human experience is by the gambit, the sacrifice of a pawn to bring off a checkmate.

It is sometimes said that the Sermon on the Mount is roseately ideal but utterly removed from the stern realities of daily life. Well, this beatitude, at all events, can stand being interpreted along rigidly literal and practical lines ; it has the witness of verifiable history at its back. The Romans were lords of creation, heritors of the whole earth. What was the secret of their bright imperialism ? In part, at least, because they did not exact the last ounce of their rights as conquerors.

To the point almost of quixotism, as Prof. Findlay has pointed out, they had regard for the wishes of the vanquished. For the Jews they issued a special coinage without the head of the Emperor upon it, so that their servile state might not be rubbed home too ruthlessly. Because of their Sabbath law the Jews were wholly exempt from military service. At the Temple no one save a Jew might enter the inner court on pain of death, and this law, having the effect of excluding themselves, was not only allowed but enforced by the Romans, to whom every inch of ground belonged by right of conquest. I wonder if Jesus was thinking of the Roman forbearance when He spoke of the trait that brings the earth as its inheritance. In modern times, is not South Africa one of the brightest jewels in the British Crown, and men like General Smuts among the lealest sons of Empire, just because in the hour of our questionable glory we did not grind the faces of the vanquished ? Blessed

are those who are not sticklers for their rights, for they shall inherit the earth. So this beatitude, which was spoken doubtless in a figurative sense, is not without validity in its more literal aspect. It is forbearance that brings the round earth as an inheritance.

(2) Later on in this chapter we have a vivid illustration from Jesus Himself of the kind of thing He means. You have had a quarrel with a man, so acute that it is going to the Courts ; a lawsuit is pending. When you're on the way to the Law Courts to have the case tried, lo and behold, just there in Temple Bar, you run into your opponent turning out of Chancery-lane. Even at that stage, when the quarrel has been carried so far, you have still a God-given opportunity of coming to terms. Sanctified common-sense and human friendliness ought to be able to find a way out. It means a concession, of course ; a concession of part of our plaguey dignity, which is the cause of the perpetuation of half our silly

quarrels. Climb down from your high horse, and try to come to an agreement. That line of conciliation may or may not succeed ; but if you fail to embrace an opportunity of that kind, you stand to lose in any event. For even if you win your case, there is the Court of Appeal in your own conscience, and as a result of its proceedings you are flung into the prison-cell of your own lofty exclusiveness, and with your precious dignity all inviolate, you pay to the very last farthing in unhappiness. Now that is a weak and feckless way of living ; there is no spectacle so lamentable as that of two people with a quarrel, neither of whom will budge an inch from his position of so-called firmness. The man who is a master in the great art of living is prepared to concede a bagatelle in order to win the wondrous boon of happiness both for himself and for his opponent who is of weaker fibre. For make quite sure of this—it's the past-master in the art of chess who goes in for gambits ; the

THE GAMBIT

novice clings to every pawn he has. It's the really virile mind and the really noble spirit that can overcome the starched folly of a quarrel, and make the advance towards reconciliation. "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him"—while you are still out in the street, in Temple Bar. The Jesus Gambit, if only it were followed, would bring happiness into ten thousand lives to-day.

(3) Now hitherto we have been dealing with the principle of the gambit only in our relations with other people, but Jesus made it equally clear that we may need to practise it in our own private lives. The ideal of the Master in regard to human life was that it should be full-orbed and zestful. The folk who have no music in their souls save crochets and who appear as skeletons at the feast, pointing skinny fingers of disapproval at the debonair and the light-of-heart are assuredly not bringing in the Kingdom of Heaven. "All things are yours."

THE GAMBIT

You may have a catholicity of tastes and interests if your heart is right. The eyes that are zealous in the Scriptures may also delight in the fine points of an etching. The feet that are beautiful upon the mountains and swift on errands of mercy may put in some good service at centre-half, and the hands that are always doing good works may include among them turning a four to leg. It was God who fashioned the eye and the foot and the hand, and He made them that they might minister to abundant life. Other things being equal, the man of many-sided interest is the finest Christian.

But it is a fact of experience not to be gainsaid that for some men this ideal is too high. In such a case one has to choose between losing a pawn or ultimately losing the game. It is far the best to have all one's limbs and all one's faculties, but if one limb has gangrene and an eye is malignantly diseased, it is sound wisdom to part with them. One morbid

THE GAMBIT

member may cause the death of the whole organism. Far better, says Jesus, to let go some part of your full-orbed life, if completing the circle means risking moral perdition. A life with fewer phases but all of them contributing to health is better than a life of large and catholic interests, if some of them are breeding rottenness. Rather delimit your field, shut out from your purview some of the scenes from life's many-coloured pageant, if these are having a baleful influence upon your soul. Better be deformed and limp into life on one leg, or with an empty sleeve, or with a gaping eye-socket, than go to ruin with a superficial symmetry. To make life a triumph and not a tragedy, it may be necessary to sacrifice some of your forces. In your dealings with your own soul, as well as in your dealings with your fellow men, you may need to adopt the gambit. And when the game is over, the pieces laid by in the closet, and we rise to go hence, we shall thank God for this good counselling.

THE KNIGHT'S MOVE

THE KNIGHT'S MOVE

OF all the strange evolutions on a chess-board, there is one that holds for me a special fascination ; it is the movement of the knight. The queen sweeps out on venturesome journeys in all directions ; the king with more masculine caution goes one square at a time ; the castle may be lifted from its "commanding corner site" and carried (like Aladdin's palace) in straight lines forward or flankwise ; and the bishop—he always travels oblique ! But between the castle and the bishop stands the knight and his movement is a weird blending of both—one straight, one oblique. The knight's movement is something unique upon the chessboard. That combination of the straight and the oblique gives him a distinction all his own. Not even the queen, for all her

THE KNIGHT'S MOVE

puissance, can move in the capricious way that belongs to her courtier. Both she and the king *can* move one straight, one oblique ; but they must take two moves to do it, whereas the knight can swerve !

Now there is a philosophy of life on the chessboard and men have not been slow to interpret it. Owen Meredith has written of it in lines of haunting melody.

Irene, do you yet remember,
Ere we were grown so sadly wise,
Those evenings in the bleak December,
Curtained warm from the snowy weather,
When you and I played chess together,
Checkmated by each other's eyes ?

Ah, still I see your soft white hand,
Hovering warm o'er queen and knight.
Brave pawns in valiant battle stand,
The double castles guard the wings,
The bishop, bent on distant things,
Moves, sidling, through the fight.

Adown the field your queen
Rides slow, her soldiery all between,
And checks me unaware.

THE KNIGHT'S MOVE

Ah me ! the little battle's done,
Disperst is all its chivalry.
Full many a move since then have we
Mid life's perplexing chequers made,
And many a game with fortune played—
What is it we have won ?

Owen Meredith has his philosophy of the chessboard ; but that is a wide and not an easy theme. Suppose we content ourselves with a narrower field—the philosophy of the knight's move.

Among the thousands of papyri which have been dug up of late in the deserts of Egypt, and which were the contents of old waste-paper baskets, there is a letter whose date is September of the year A.D. I. It is from an Egyptian who had gone to Alexandria, and had left his wife at home somewhere up country. She had been expecting a child when he left her, and in his kind uncouth way he writes to her with husbandly tenderness. Here is the letter. “Hilarion to Alis,

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greeting ! Let me tell you that we are still at Alexandria. Do not get fretting if at the general return I stay on in Alexandria. As soon as we get our wages, I will send you up something. How can I ever forget you ? So don't be fretting." Now that surely is the utterance of a man who is striving to do the straight thing. The letter does credit to the author of it. Now listen how the letter goes on. "If the event has taken place and it is a boy, take care of him ; if it is a girl, throw it out." It was the hideous custom of the time to leave babies on the river-bank for the crocodiles, or on waste ground for the carrion crows. Some people made a regular business of collecting derelict babies, and these people, you may be sure, were not performing the function of a foundling hospital. It was a cheap way of getting slaves who were often reared for unspeakable lives. So in this old letter we see a man revealing a depth of masculine tenderness towards his wife, striving

THE KNIGHT'S MOVE

to safeguard her from worry, and yet in the very next sentence blandly betraying a brutality of purpose that takes one's breath away.

Poor Hilarion! You see, his was the knight's progress—one straight and one oblique; one square on the lines and one off; first unswervingly forward, then dreadfully awry, and all in the same move, all in the same scrap of letter. Of all motions on the chessboard the knight's is the most complex and the most characteristic of human life. Right and wrong, true and false, belief and unbelief, are not these ofttimes to be found together in one act, one impulse, one emotion?

What is it that Omar sings? He too had his philosophy of the chessboard.

'Tis all a chequerboard of nights and days,
Where Destiny with men for pieces plays,
Hither and thither moves and mates and slays
And one by one back in the closet lays.

We have no use for the feckless fatalism of the indulgent old Persian, but if we accept

THE KNIGHT'S MOVE

his metaphor of the chequerboard for human life, then you and I assuredly are the knights among the chessmen.

Now in the knight's move it matters not whether you regard it as first straight, then oblique, or first oblique, then straight. He lands on the same square either way. And in human life it is sometimes the oblique motion that comes first, and the straight that follows.

The tangle of amours in which Robert Burns emmeshed himself makes sad and sorry reading. The first, you remember, of the long series was with Jean Armour, the pretty hoyden of the village green. Three years later, after several intervening exploits in the lists of Cupid, there is a correspondence afoot between two people who poetically call themselves Clarinda and Sylvander, these being in actuality a certain Mrs. M'Lehose and the bard. On the 21st of March he wrote to Clarinda :
"Will you open with satisfaction and delight

THE KNIGHT'S MOVE

a letter from a man who loves you, who will love you, to death, through death and for ever?" Yet right in the midst of this illicit amour there came a sudden inexplicable impulse towards the straight. Seventeen days after he wrote these impassioned lines to Clarinda, arrangements were in train for his making Jean Armour publicly his wife! The straight path and the crooked path were traversed astonishingly in the same swift movement. Concerning this move of the bard's, Robert Louis Stevenson says: "A more amazing stage-trick is not to be found. And yet his conduct is seen upon nearer examination to be grounded both in reason and in kindness." Letters to Clarinda, marriage with Jean Armour—one crooked, one straight—all compassed well nigh within a fortnight! It is the knight's move.

Have the Scriptures, that faithful mirror of human nature, anything to tell us about the

THE KNIGHT'S MOVE

knight's move? Do they, too, like ancient history and modern history, hold up for our good counselling examples of this erratic progress? Alongside of Hilarion and the hapless Robbie are there cases to be laid where good and evil were conjoined, not simply in the same life (for that is a universal and a commonplace), but in the same impulse, the same endeavour, the same breath?

One day the scion of a noble house, a young patrician, a boy with high ideals and a moral sensitiveness, had come to a travelling preacher, who, he felt, could give him something that his nation's code of morals was failing to supply in his religious yearning. "What must I do," he said, "to inherit eternal life?" It was a straight question and a straight move. The Master, looking upon him, loved him for his straightness. There was a swift diagnosis, a straight answer to a straight question, "and he went away, sorrowful." Alas, the oblique turn after the straight! Poor knight!

Another day, at Cæsarea Philippi, whither Jesus had gone with His disciples on a northern tour, a conversation took place which was memorable through all history. It was between Peter and his Master, and in the early part of it the disciple attained to the very pinnacle of his faith and daring. "Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the Living God," he said to the man of flesh and blood before him. Him with Whom he had slept and breakfasted and engaged in the countless pursuits of their workaday life, he suddenly declared to be more than human. That was a move of thrilling, superb daring; it was advancing with an abandon, with a mental courage, that must have made the pulses beat and the brain reel for a moment with the marvel of it. The commendation of the Master fell upon him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona." In that moment the Christian Church took a step forward that made history. Thereupon the talk proceeded, the Master disclosing what lay

THE KNIGHT'S MOVE

ahead ; and the exuberant Peter, presuming on his new-won triumph, lightly dismissed all thought of coming tragedy. In that instant, the Master heard again the same cajoling accents as He heard in the wilderness, urging the way of escape, the easy course. In Peter's onward progress the points were suddenly changed ; he swerved from the path of the Church's great apostle to the oblique track of the tempter. At one moment "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona," at the next, "Get thee behind me, Adversary !" Gloriously straight and then pathetically crooked, and all in the same access of enthusiasm !

It is the knowledge of this twofold potentiality in his nature that makes a man cry, "Lord, I believe ; help thou mine unbelief." Belief and unbelief may well be linked in one sentence, for they are often close-linked in life. Jekyll may change to Hyde and Hyde to Jekyll with a speed that is startling. There is so much good in the worst of us, and so

THE KNIGHT'S MOVE

much bad in the best of us, and oftentimes the good and bad lie strangely near to their contraries. We are all knights upon the chess-board, moving now straight, now oblique, after a fashion that baffles the mind to follow it.

For God's knights there is but one thing to do. Commit to Him belief and unbelief, triumph and tragedy, our straight moves and our oblique. There is joy in the heart of the Most High whenever we go straight; there is none other in heaven or earth that can help us when we have gone crooked.

CREATION

I DID not dream

That violins could hold so much romance,
Until some happy chance
Betrayed to me one night the covert gleam
From an old fiddlemaker's crazy shop,
Hid in a court off Fleet Street, where the 'buses stop ;
And as we talked in friendly wise, my heart
Went out to him, so kindly-eyed was he,
So joyously the bond-slave of his art,
That violins now hold new thrall for me,
Remembering that rare benignity.

I did not know

There could be in a yellow daffodil
Such poetry, until
Amid my wanderings I chanced to go
Through a dark arch—that disappeared forthwith—
Into the dreamland workshop where God is the smith;
And there I marked how tenderly He wrought
The curve of leaf and petal, how He spent
Over those golden trumpets lingering thought,
Each tiniest calyx born of His intent—
Now every yellow field's a sacrament.

.....
" THE THOUGHT IN A SANDAL-SKIN "
.....

“ THE THOUGHT IN A SANDAL-SKIN ”

How much of the romance and the philosophy of life centres round shoes !

Maybe one of the first stories that we ever heard, when the nursery curtains were drawn and the sheets were tucked up beneath our chins, was the story of a little lady who was made a drudge. But one night it was decreed that she should go to the ball, and her rags were discarded for garments that befitted a queen, and on her feet she wore sable slippers.

The story was mangled as it passed from French into English, for through a translator's blunder *pantoufles en vair* was mistaken for *pantoufles en verre*, so that the sable slippers became glass slippers. But none the less, it was round the slippers that the great romance

“THE THOUGHT IN A SANDAL-SKIN”

that followed had its setting ; it was through the lost slipper that Prince Charming found his bride.

There is an unwritten romance in slippers ! And to those who have eyes to see and a heart to understand, they hold a philosophy of life also. It is a modern poet who has sung to us “The Cobbler’s Song” :

I sit and cobble at slippers and shoon
From the rise of sun to the set of moon. . . .
And as I cobble with needle and thread
I judge the world by the way they tread. . . .
Heels worn thick and soles worn thin,
Toes turned out and toes turned in—
There’s food for thought in a sandal-skin.

And ancient thinkers likewise believed that there was food for thought in a sandal-skin, for in the Scriptures the shoe had a strange symbolism of its own.

The shoe was a token of OWNERSHIP. To walk across an estate at one’s own sweet will is a right that belongs specifically to the owner. So when a man became a landlord, he made

token of his proprietorship by walking across the ground, treading upon it with his shoes. By-and-by, it became enough to throw one's shoe upon the ground that had been purchased.

Hence when the poet of Israel in the sixtieth Psalm would picture God asserting His ownership over all the world, he thinks of Him as a warrior for Whom the nations are as His equipment and His gear. One is His helmet, another is His sceptre, a third is the basin in which He cleanses off the grime and dust of battle and all are His, under His hand to do His bidding. "Gilead is Mine, Manasseh is Mine, Ephraim is My helmet (the strength of my head), Judah is My sceptre, Moab is My washpot, and over Edom will I *cast My shoe*." That was the symbol of control. Even proud Edom is within the tenancy of God. In the last issue the Almighty is suzerain. The paganism that would hurl defiance at high heaven can go no whit beyond the limits that God assigns. We are not lone marchers on the great campaign ;

we are colleagues with God, and over all the world has He cast His shoe.

If the shoe, then, was the natural symbol of possession, to take off one's shoe was the natural symbol of relinquishing possession. In the harvest fields of Bethlehem long years ago the squire had fallen in love with a girl who was a gleaner in his fields. But she was a widow and according to the custom of the time it was the right of the nearest kinsman of the dead man to take his place and become the widow's husband ; and so Boaz was hindered in his wooing. But one morning Ruth's kinsman and the squire met at the city gate where the elders sat in judgment ; and the kinsman made it clear to Boaz that he had no mind to press his right. So in token of his surrendered claims he loosed a shoe and handed it to Boaz, and in the strength of that token the idyll of the harvest field had happy ending.

Even to-day, when a daughter is wedded and her parents relinquish her from their safe-

keeping, is not a shoe tied in token on to the bridal car as it departs ?

Secondly the shoe was the symbol of PILGRIMAGE. When a Hebrew was at home or when he entered a friend's dwelling, he left his sandals at the entrance. They were needed only when he walked abroad. But one night in the year the members of every household wore their sandals, although they were indoors. They stood all girt for travel, ready for flight at any moment, staff in hand and shod with sandals. It was to celebrate the Passover, that night when their forefathers escaped from Egypt and set out on their pilgrimage to the land of promise. The wearing of the sandals on that anniversary night was to recall to them that here they have no abiding city, for they seek one that is to come. You remember Ophelia's song in *Hamlet* ?

How shall I your true love know
From another one ?
By his cockle hat and staff
And his sandal shoon.

It was the marks of the pilgrim that were to betoken the true love, and the wisest men in this life of ours are likewise those who wear the sandal shoon.

Again, the shoe is the symbol of CONQUEST. As we go on our pilgrimage, we find things in the long grass that must be spurned under heel, and, please God, we can do it. This truth was enshrined long ago by the poet-writer of the Book of Genesis, who said that the seed of the woman would at last bruise the serpent's head, but there was always a danger that his heel would be poisoned by the serpent's fang. For so perilous a chance we need a sandal with a stout sole.

And happily that is not far to seek. For the Apostle speaks of your feet being shod with the preparation of the Gospel, with the readiness which the Gospel brings. It is thus that we may have our feet protected against the nameless things that nest in the undergrowth and rear their noisome heads in our unguarded moments.

Are your shoes in good fettle, your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel? Every critical battle, said a great general, has been won by the soldiers' boots. For the Great Campaign one's feet must be snake-proof, shod by the Armourer Himself.

Lastly, the shoe was a symbol of RANK. Among the peoples of the East the slaves of a household went barefoot, while the sons, even though they laboured in the fields, were shod with sandals. When a great man walked abroad, the lowliest slave in the household went with him, carrying a change of shoes and ready at any moment to loosen or fasten his master's shoe-buckles. Hence it was the greatest abasement he could think of when John the Baptist said of himself in relation to his Lord that he was unworthy to bear His sandals or unfasten His shoe latchet. You remember, too, that when Jesus sent forth His disciples into the villages, they went without shoes for their feet. They were barefoot preachers, in the

guise of servants to their fellow-men, servants to their Master. Slaves went barefoot, but the sons in the household were shod.

So another story takes on a new lustre, for when the prodigal came home he asked to be made as the hired servants, not as one of the faithful retainers who mid shower and shine had served the household through a cycle of years. To be ranked with those honoured and grey-haired henchmen were to look too high ; but as a hired servant, called in for a time of special pressure, when the harvests were being gathered or when there was a party at the grange, "make me as one of the casual labourers." But the father would have none of it. Despite all the shame of the swine-trough, he was fain of his son, and would restore him to his old-time place. "Bring forth the best robe," was his cry, and then with a measured meaningfulness in his tone, "*put shoes on his feet.*" To that footsore and heartsick boy few things that day were so joyous as the soft

pressure of sandal-straps around his ankles, betokening so signally his sonship in his father's house.

One night not long ago a minister was called to the bedside of a dying boy in one of the great London hospitals. There had been an operation ; things had gone wrong ; and the boy had fallen into a troubled sleep, from which, the nurse said, he might not waken. The minister sat down in the glimmering ward and listened to the laddie as he talked in a half-delirium. He had been a keen Scout, and now some exploit from the past had come back with a present urgency. He was wading through a stream and his shoes which he had tied together and slung across his shoulders had slipped and were lost in the current.

The minister felt then that God was giving him a message. Leaning over the pillow he whispered to the boy, who became suddenly silent at the sound of a voice, these two texts :
“ When thou passest through the waters, I will

“THE THOUGHT IN A SANDAL-SKIN”

be with thee.” “Bring forth the best robe and put it on him and put shoes on his feet.” Then, added the minister : “There will be new shoes for you on the other side.”

And that is the very quintessence of the Good News.

THE UNCARVEN TIMBERS

THE UNCARVEN TIMBERS

A Fantasy

IT all happened long years ago when the world was much younger and maybe more light of heart than it is to-day.

Seated at the open window of an upper room a little boy was trying to carve an angel out of a beam of maple wood.

He was a gay little fellow, with a bewitching smile and a great zest for living. His home was in a sleepy-hollow where men lived leisurely and thought long ; but for the child it was a very arena for exploits and adventure and deeds of derring-do. Brigands, beyond all cavil, dwelt in the glen hard by the village ; and some day, if one were lucky, one might glimpse a naiad by the dewpond, though somehow a twig always *would* crack underfoot, no

matter how silently one tiptoed. Sometimes, too, of an evening he would climb the ridge of hills that girdled the hamlet, and watch the leisurely traffic that tinkled down the great caravan road near by. Sultans in fine linen and pedlars in fustian, couriers on ambling dromedaries and paladins on foot—they made a rare spectacle for the little lad half-hidden in the bushes by the roadside. Some day, he resolved, he too would be a king and ride a palfrey, and men would salaam to him. Thus the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them came dimly within his ken.

To-day he had been far afield on the track of the banditti who surely had their lair in the greenwood. The quest had been thrilling and perilous, but grapes, alas, do not grow on bramble-bushes nor figs on thistles, as he found good cause that scorching day to remember. So it was a tired and thirsty knight-errant who reached home in the evening. But the upper-room that faced toward the sunset was always

cool, and its window was a happy coign of vantage for all the doings of the village street. This window was a favourite retreat of his. It was at the open window that he always said his prayers, for Daniel was one of his heroes and for his devotions the window needs must be open, even though it rained ! (It was a pity that the window did not just face towards Jerusalem, but by standing a little sideways that difficulty could be overcome !) Here to-night at the open window he folded his hands and thanked the good God for all the things that made his life so happy. He wished he could do some service for the good God in return. Once he had asked his mother what he could do for God, and she had told him that one day he would be called on to do great things, but as she spoke a look of pain had come into her face, just as though a sword had pierced her heart. Since then he had kept his own counsels. But he did wish he could do something now for God. In the little village

church was a wooden lampstand which his father had carved and given to God's service. That was a beautiful gift, but then his father was a carpenter and wood was as clay in his fingers. There was certainly room for another lampstand, because in the corner of the church where his mother sat, the light was dim, and . . .

From the workshop below came the sounds of activity, the smooth pleasant sound of planing and the harsher rasp of the saw, and now and then the ring of a hammer. As he listened, the smile of new resolution lighted his eyes. In another moment he was in the joinery, and soon was hauling up the stairs a beam of timber. Then with his jack-knife he set to work upon one end of it, notching out the semblance of an angel's outstretched wing, like the wings of the cherubim above the Mercy-seat. Thus he sat at the open window while the sunset flamed in the western sky.

He had made but little progress before a

jangle of voices in the street below took his attention. This was the night, he knew, when the lord of the manor was giving a great dinner at the grange, but his intended guests, so it seemed, were treating his bounty with scant respect. It was already past the hour for which they had been invited, and the servant of the troubled host was abroad to jog the memory of the defaulting guests. Three of them were lounging outside the joinery ; and with a curious mingling of pain and anger in his heart the boy listened to them as they vied with one another in devising ribald excuses. "I have bought a farm," said one, "and must needs go and inspect it." "I have bought five yoke of oxen," said another. "I have married a wife," capped a third, and a roar of laughter greeted this climax. The boy rose at length and closed the lattice, his cheeks flaming. He was a great friend of the lord of the manor, who had given him free charter—solemnly sealed by hand-clasp—to play in the coppice behind the big

barn. It went to the heart of the boy that his benefactor should be treated thus cavalierly. Long years afterwards this incident was recalled, as gradually he learned the bitter truth that those who have easiest access to the Lord's halls are often those who treat His love with contumely.

The beam he had been carving slipped to the floor with a heavy thud. You cannot carve angels when your heart is sore.

Next morning when he awoke, his eyes lighted upon the plank with the strange notches at one corner, and he was of a mind to continue at his task. But his playmates who were revelling in the sunshine were calling him to join the revels, and he sallied forth with them to the market-square. In and out among the booths and market-stalls they played as they had played a score of times before. He and others of the band entered with a will into the games, but a few that morning seemed peevish and difficult to please. First they played at weddings and he awoke the echoes with his

jocund whistling and make-believe piping, but the children of the bride-chamber sat with glum faces and would not take their place in the festal dance. So—with the easy accommodation of childhood—they changed the nuptials into a funeral, and he wailed heart-rendingly and wrung his hands, as was the manner of hired mourners in a bereaved home. But again the malcontents would not beat their breasts and play properly, and this game, too, suffered an abrupt end. So he strolled homewards and maybe his chin quivered for a moment, though you would not have known it. In later years he likened certain grown-up people to those crosspatch friends of his who cavilled at everything one tried to do for them. In his retreat in the upper room he surveyed for a moment the notched plank in the corner—but he did not move it from its place.

Some days later he returned to the task at his favourite place by the open window, and

the angel's wing received a few more notches. At the big farmhouse across the green there had been great happenings that day, for the ne'er-do-well son of the old farmer had returned, penitent and broken, to the old homestead. Music and revelry were now celebrating the glad event. The whole village was rejoicing with the grey old farmer, who, despite all the head-shakings, had never once despaired of the runaway, but always believed he would some day return. Even the boy shared the common gladness, and he whistled as his knife plied about the beam. But now, on glancing up, he saw in the field the farmer's elder son, with a face as black as thunder, shaking off his father's caresses and roundly refusing to join the merriment. It was not a pleasant sight.

That night the plank with its one mutilated corner was restored to its bed of shavings in the joinery !

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The days of youth have crept on apace, and the erstwhile hunter of brigands is now a man in his early prime. He has long ago been apprenticed to the village joinery, but the head of the household has been gathered to his fathers, and the livelihood of the widow and her little brood depends upon the young craftsman who is her eldest son. All day long he labours in the workshop, shaping and cutting and planing the fragrant timber ; for no carpenter in all the countryside could make a yoke that was so well-fitting and easy as those that came from his workshop—his yokes never galled the necks of the oxen. Somehow, the village folk love to look in at the open door and have a word with him as he works, especially if they chance to be downcast or in sorrow. The path back from the joinery always seemed so much fairer than the path thither.

Sometimes, too, his work took him afield. One day he was summoned to a neighbouring castle to repair a treasure-chest whose fastening

had been damaged. As he worked with chisel and file, the old nobleman who owned the demesne became interested in the young craftsman, and they fell to talking about treasure-chests and treasure. So, when the work was finished, the connoisseur unlocked the coffer and proudly brought forth for inspection the wonders that lay in its deep recesses. Amulets of rare and grotesque design, charms from Egyptian temples, jewelled sword-hilts from the smithies of old Damascus—here were relics that had helped to make history in bygone ages. But side by side with these ancient treasures there were others, fresh from the hands of the goldsmith and fashioned with the finest and latest workmanship that the cunning of men had devised—of these the owner seemed as proud as of the old curios. The carpenter long remembered that commission to repair the treasure-chest, and often recalled admiringly the balanced interests of that old connoisseur who, for all his grey hairs, could

bring forth from his treasure things new and old.

One day, in turning out some lumber in the joinery, he chanced to light upon the old plank on which his novice hand had tried to carve an angel. He smiled to himself as he surveyed his old handiwork, but it set him thinking. The old lampstand which his father had given had served its turn, but there was room now for a new one, and who should replace the old gift more fitly than the son of the donor?

So another beam was selected, and the old project of his youth was attempted once again—to carve an angel from a plank of maple wood.

But despite all his endeavours the angel was never fashioned. His young brothers and sisters loved to play in the joinery while he was working in the evenings, and ere long something would always happen to check his progress. One day, while they were playing

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at a snowstorm (with shavings), a particle of flying sawdust settled in the eye of one of the little folk, and the trouble was made worse by the clumsy fingers of a well-meaning brother whose own eyes were blinded by the great blizzard. Then the carving tools had to be laid aside, and soon the tears and tantrums were turned to laughter by the funny story which the big brother told about a certain little boy who tried to take a speck of sawdust from his brother's eye when all the time there was a baulk of timber in his own ! No one could tell such wonderful stories as this big brother, stories about banditti on the mountain roads who plundered travellers, stories about landlords who were robbed by their bailiffs, stories (especially thrilling) about buried treasure left by retreating armies long years ago and found by poor peasants as they dug in the soil. Sometimes he would find that the little audience, perched up on his carpenter's bench, had grown while he had been speaking, and he

would look up to see the grave wistful face of a villager who seemed to find a strange interest in listening to him.

It was all so worth while, but meantime the bare plank remained a bare plank.

Sometimes the mood for working at it was banished from him by some sorry event in the village, now by some callous treatment of a widow who cried to a judge for justice against her adversary, now by the inhumanity of a servant towards one of his mates who owed him a paltry debt, and sometimes by a more tragic incident.

For one evening, with the beam under his arm, he slipped off quietly to the coppice behind the big barn where of old he had played at brigands. The park had a neglected look, for indeed the place had fallen on evil days. The old lord of the manor in his failing health had gone to a far country, leaving his estate in the hands of servants; and the dealing of these men left in charge had long been an

open scandal. From time to time his agents had arrived to collect the dues from the estate, and each in turn had been brutally assaulted. To those who had known the place in happier days the old haunts had a certain pathos.

As he worked at the beam, under the level fans of a great cedar, he was suddenly startled by a step behind him. He turned to find confronting him a young man with the dust of travel upon his clothes. There was a moment of mutual recognition, for the stranger was the heir, the son of the lord of the manor, and in this very coppice the two had hunted brigands in the long ago. The young man had come at length in person to set his father's house in order and to receive the rightful revenues.

The two lingered for a moment in conversation, and then the traveller, declining assistance and relying upon the authority which his position gave him, set off alone towards the forbidding manor. From the bole of the cedar the carpenter watched him, as he made his way

up the grass-grown path, through the white wicket and into the orchard that hid him from sight.

The tragedy that followed cast a gloom upon the whole village ; and in the joinery, although the routine work on wagon-wheels, and yokes and plough-handles went on as usual, the old experience of the carpenter's boyhood still held good—you cannot carve angels when your heart is sore.

At length the conviction began to steal in upon him that those beams were never to be transformed into the fair shapes he pictured for them ; and by-and-by the second plank was hidden away beside the first and forgotten for a dozen years, until they were sent in a consignment of timber to the south country.

On Calvary Hill he saw the two beams again with the strange notches, that were the wistful beginnings of an angel's wing. For now the

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beams formed His cross. But for sin of careless men and women those uncarven timbers on which He suffered might long ago have been transformed into things of heavenly beauty.

THE FLEET THAT WAS BECALMED

THE FLEET THAT WAS BECALMED

AT the end of the jetty the figure of a woman was silhouetted against the sunset. The outline somehow spelt despair.

Below her the flotilla of fishing-boats that had been rocking all day at their moorings were being untethered by horny hands. In the little harbour all was stir and tumult as the fishing fleet made ready for the night's toil. The rattle of tackle and the creak of cordage, as the lateen sails were hoisted, mingled with the good-nights of the embarking fishers. Already a few boats, their ship's company complete, were pushing off from the roadstead. Near the end of the jetty a wherry was afloat in which a young giant of a man was adjusting the rudder, while his mates fixed the tholepins for the rowlocks. It was this young Hercules

whom the girl on the jetty above was watching, watching in vague and unvoiced disquiet. At length, the rudder-brace fixed and the oarsmen in their places on the thwarts, the little craft moved out from the lee of the jetty into open water. The young steersman waved his farewell to the girl, as the boat began to make headway before the freshening breeze. She watched the receding fleet until at length it was hidden in the deepening dusk, and the ahoys of the fishermen grew fainter and then ceased. In a moment or two she faced landward and turned her steps from the shore to the hill-village where already on the face of the bluff the candles were twinkling in cottage windows. She was pale and distraught, possessed by a vague, unreasoning fear of coming disaster out on the waste of waters. In her room, that faced towards the sunrising and the sea, she stood for a while at the lattice, watching the tiny flares from the fishing vessels and wondering which light was his. On the beach

below all was now silent. The crowd that had thronged there all the evening was gone. The chief figure in that throng now rose before her mind's eye, the young roving evangelist who had been preaching at the water's edge and whose words held such a spell. He had been absent for some weeks with his band of followers, preaching through the countryside, but from every tour he returned sooner or later to his lodging in the village here which he made his base. To-night he and his friends, she noticed, had set sail with the fishing fleet, although they had no tackle. Maybe they had gone in search of quiet to the hills on the eastern shore. She wondered what course they had steered and whether her lover's boat had taken the same tack. . . . What a strange preacher the young evangelist was! The priests never told stories about pearl-traders, and sowers going forth to sow, or made quips about fools who put a lighted lamp under the bed, and themselves sat in the dark. There

was some deep meaning too underlying all his words. "He that hath an ear to hear, let him listen to this," he had said time and again. She wondered whether she had ears to hear . . . and she wondered still more how the trawlers were faring on the fishing-ground. With this medley of thoughts she sought her pillow.

Meanwhile the trawlers had spread themselves fanwise across the lake, and the nets with their cork floats were already let down for a haul. The lithe-limbed young pilot in the stern of his boat was steering due east. It so chanced that hitherto they had kept close to another boat, whose crew were not fishing, but were plying hard at the oars, and were heading, it would seem, for the opposite coast.

It was the boat of the missionary and his friends, who were making for the solitary regions that lay across the water. Less than seven miles across was a desolate shore far from the haunts of men. Fifty feet from the

margins of the sea rose an escarpment of barren hills, and here among the sheltered coves and in the hollows of the hills were favourite resorts of the pilgrim preachers. Thither to-night with the fishing fleet as a friendly convoy they had set sail. The missionary, who had been preaching all day, was ready to take his place at the oars, but his friends would have none of it, and so to give the oarsmen on the thwarts free play, he lay back under the lea of the deck-shelter where mariners off the watch took refuge from the weather. Then, as the oar-blades plashed in rhythm and the boat rocked in the going, he fell fast asleep on the coxswain's leather cushion.

In the trawler which was still not a furlong distant the young pilot was watching the seine, and steering the boat skilfully to avoid fouling it. Soon he began to cast anxious glances at the heavens. Masses of cloud were rolling up from the landward, shrouding the starlight, so

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that their flare of oiled rag, burning in the iron cage in the bow, seemed only to reveal the darkness. In a moment or two the hurricane smote full upon them. Sweeping down from the snowy northern heights, through the gorges in the cliffs, it lashed the slumbrous sea to sudden fury. The flying spindrift stung the faces of the crouching mariners ; the frail craft tossed like a cockleshell in the abyss of waters ; and as the waves broke across the gunwale, she shipped heavy seas. The crew plied the baling tins at the rising waters with little avail.

Then with equal suddenness the mutiny of the waves died down. The waters ceased to be a maelstrom. The sea became a tranquil level, fretted only by the footprints of the tiptoeing winds. Soon the starlight shone again upon a halcyon sea, and ere long the fishers were dragging-in their nets over the gunwale.

In the missionary's boat the crew plied their oars eastward again, on a becalmed sea. When at length the keel grated on the pebbles, the

first flush of sunrise was quickening in the sky. They put in at a strand where the scarp of hills sloped down almost to the water's edge. The rising sun glinted on the white sepulchres on the hillside, where a herd of swine were rooting. A naked madman who dwelt in a cave sepulchre rose shrieking wildly at the strangers' approach. Thus ended the voyage of adventure for the party who had gone in quest of peace.

At the fishing village on the opposite coast a woman was standing in the grey dawn, at the end of the jetty. The horror of vigil was over; in a few moments she must know the worst. The vague foreboding in her heart had become actual when the tempest broke upon the township in the night watches, rattling the casements and sounding its bugle call down the village street. What toll had the tempest taken on the sea? Other villagers were arriving at the quayside, silent and strained, peering seaward through the mists of morning. Then

the curved prow of a fishing vessel hove in sight, and to the calls from the quay ahoy rang out cheerily. It was a battered craft that came alongside, with torn canvas and timbers smitten amidships, yet with ship's company complete and a wondrous silver cargo in the nets. A strange story they told as they climbed the jetty, how that in the midst of the hurricane a calm had settled round the missionary's boat, and the other boats in the offing had thus been saved from dire jeopardy.

The young pilot looped the mooring hawser across a bollard, and together the lovers turned from the foreshore to climb the bluff. The children, lightly clad and barefoot, were playing at the cottage doors. To right and left the red anemones that fringed the creeks shone like a loose ribbon along the water's edge. The plash of the water-wheel beside the tannery and the ring of the mallets in the boatyard held a new music for these two, restored to one another.

THE FLEET THAT WAS BECALMED

And in their hearts were incommunicable things and something at least of eternal truth, for to have Him with us means not only peace and salvation for ourselves, but peace and salvation for those in the offing who chance to be cruising near us.

BALLADE OF INNOCENCE

I WATCHED the children romping yesterday—
The madcap Madge and dainty Isobel
And Jack, the lithe of limb, who loves to play
At being the intrepid sentinel
Outside a fast beleaguered citadel.
And then I marked with fresh and sweet surprise
That wondrous thing which thralls me with its spell,
The guileless look in little children's eyes !

Men often find it passing hard to pray
Amid the brawl of those who buy and sell ;
But when a heart is tempted to obey
The sinister suggestions that impel
A man to craven compromise with hell,
God sends him many a thing that purifies ;
But none for power and beauty can excel
The guileless look in little children's eyes.

When mid the daily rigour of the fray
I feel the subtle prompting to rebel,
These tiny colleagues mutely say me nay
And nerve endeavour more than tongue can tell.
But God forbid that long as I may dwell
With these my dear and debonair allies,
A word or deed of mine should e'er dispel
The guileless look in little children's eyes.

l'Envoi.

Ah, God, restrain the baleful infidel
Whose fell contrivings may demoralise
That peerless beauty that we love so well,
The guileless look in little children's eyes !

THE EYE CLINIC

THE EYE CLINIC

At many of the great hospitals it is the custom to admit students of medicine to the theatre or to the wards, so that they may listen to the Professor's exposition of the various cases that come before him.

I propose very humbly to assume the rôle of ophthalmic surgeon and eye specialist, and invite you to gather round while I expound certain defects of vision.

CASE No. I.

This, gentlemen, is a curious instance of garbled sight. The patient in looking at the world has lost all sense of relative size. An almost infinitesimal thing will appear to him as enormously bulky, and something of huge proportions he can see hardly at all. It may

be diagnosed perhaps as a very rare form of astigmatism. This patient is very careful about filtering his drinking-water, and a mosquito in it he will carefully strain out ; but he has been known to swallow a whole camel, hump and all, without noticing it. He is a little like Philip the Second of Spain, of whom it has been said that great things and trivial things appealed to his fancy equally. This man has an allotment in which he grows kitchen vegetables, mint and endive, and so on. He is most scrupulous in making over one-tenth of all his garden stuff to the Church and in duly paying his tithes. You will never find him defaulting in that matter, because that to him is one of the big things of life ; but he fails to see that vegetables are not of vast importance compared with the weightier matters of love and human-kindness. He is a stern moralist and a stickler for the letter of the law, but he has got a heart like a flintstone. A fellow-creature who has sinned—maybe in circumstances of great temptation

and sore stress—he will condemn without mercy, and so thrust further along the path to hell, for it has never dawned on him that kindness of judgment and the willingness to give a second chance are divinely great things compared with his niggling little exactitudes. He will see the Church without a single young person in it, and with its very life-blood thus drained off, rather than countenance any procedure that does not square with his antique view of what is right. Sympathy and large-heartedness are among the massive things in life, but they bulk so little in his field of vision that he is hardly aware of them.

As regards treatment, I would recommend a year's service in the rank-and-file of the Boys' Brigade, and for medicine increasing doses of *Robinson Crusoe*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and *The Water Babies*.

CASE No. 2.

Here is a man who quite clearly has had

a foreign body in his eye. Its inflamed and watering condition makes diagnosis easy and straightforward. But on a closer scrutiny we find symptoms which are not to be explained on this hypothesis alone. The eye shows signs of having been badly mauled by blundering fingers. The patient tells us that he got a splinter into his eye in the workshop, and that a fellow-worker at his bench tried to remove it for him. This mate of his was well qualified to remove a splinter from another man's eye, except in the particular that he had a whole plank of timber in his own. That, gentlemen, is how great damage is often wrought—when people with major defects in their own vision presume to remove foreign bodies from the eyes of their friends.

CASE No. 3.

This patient presents a very distressing case of colour-blindness. Although the world we live in is a blending of radiant colours, this

man sees everything as a dull, flat drab. He has never seen the tint of orange on a robin's breast, or the purple of a moorland of bell-heather, or the crimson of a fuchsia. He thinks of the sun as the thing with spots on it. He has no inkling of the truth that even the oily filth that is belched into the river from factories makes on the surface an iridescence of gorgeous colours that rival the sunset. He has no idea that on a thoroughly wet night when the pavements are splashing with rain and the roads are a-swim with liquid-mud, the street lamps cast long golden reflections on the wet surface that make the streets a fairyland such as is never seen on a dry night. He has no idea that, as Stevenson says, the frost makes even the cart-ruts beautiful. His outlook on life is one of unrelieved greyness, for the colours of the world register no meaning upon his vision.

For him and for all such we pray, "Lord, that they may receive sight."

CASE No. 4.

This patient, gentlemen, is perturbed because he has found that in his vision he has a blind spot. It is very easy to put his fears at rest, because we can tell him that every person with normal vision has a blind spot. When we are aware of its existence we can allow for it and be on our guard against it. The blind spot affects people in strangely different ways. There are people who are scrupulously honest in their dealing with the world, and who see the need for honesty in every particular, save in that of returning borrowed books or filling up their income-tax schedule. They would never filch a single penny from anyone—except a railway company. They have what “Alpha of the Plough” calls an umbrella conscience. They would never pick a pocket or rob a till or forge a cheque, but they will if they get the chance swop umbrellas.

Every one of us has his blind spot, some

point at which our vision is not normal. It is sound wisdom to find out just where that spot is, and then to keep strict watch and ward upon our actions whenever that spot is involved.

CASE No. 5.

We have now to deal, gentlemen, with a very common defect of vision—far-sightedness. This man's eyes are so focussed that while he can see things clearly at a distance, things close by are invisible or blurred. This clearly means a very serious handicap, for the effects of far-sight are many and varied.

It is the far-sightedness of men that dooms the prophet to have no honour in his own country. It is enough apparently to discredit a man's claim to greatness that he lived in one's own street and we know his brothers and sisters. The stalwarts of the earth must always be the strangers from whom we are

separated by the great gulf of non-acquaintance.
“Is not this the carpenter’s son?”

Another folly of far-sightedness is to be always picturing the great repentance of our lives in the distant future. Some day we are going to turn over a new leaf and there will be a theatric revolution that will change everything. But that event is safely in the future. Yet the tragic truth is that every week that passes over us makes that fancied repentance harder to compass.

Finally, the man with far sight will never win through to any achievement, because he has formed a picture of future triumph beside which present actuality seems drab and hopelessly unheroic. The unrealised possibilities induce a discontent with the humbler things of which alone he is at present capable; and so not even the great things of his dreams are ever realised. A sculptor cherishes a vision of producing a masterpiece of frozen music, but that vision, instead of being a spur to

plodding industry, gives him a distaste for the indifferent statuettes that he now produces, and so the masterpiece of his dreams is never chiselled. Such a man never brings all his powers to the task in hand, because part of his dynamic is steadily leaking away in a vague discontent; as he sees how far what he *can* do falls below what he *would*. Many a man is cursed by his ideals. Many a man needs to learn to pray with Newman, "I do not ask to see the distant scene." Browning knew the peril of far-sight when he wrote—

This low man with a little thing to do

Sees it and does it.

This high man with a great thing to pursue

Dies ere he knows it.

This low man goes on adding one to one ;

His hundred's soon hit.

This high man aiming at a million

Misses a unit.

As the wise man said long years ago, wisdom is plumb in front of him that hath under-

THE EYE CLINIC

standing, but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth.

I fear the hour is now up, gentlemen. Nurse, please keep your eye on these five patients. Good morning.

.....
ON THE SIXPENCES OF GEORGE GISSING
.....

ON THE SIXPENCES OF GEORGE GISSING

SOME months ago I came across a story how once the novelist, George Gissing, found a child in a lonely spot by a woodland, sobbing his heart away. He was leaning against a tree trunk, his head buried in his arms. He must have been crying for a long time, for every muscle in his face quivered and his limbs shook. He had been sent with sixpence to pay a debt, and he had lost the money. It was not so much the fear of facing his parents as utter misery at the thought of the harm he had done them that made the tears flow so bitterly.

“Sixpence dropped by the wayside, and a whole family made wretched! I put my hand in my pocket and wrought sixpennyworth of miracle.” Such was the novelist’s own account

of the event ; and the phrase, "Sixpennyworth of miracle," catches the fancy and fires the imagination. One likes to dwell on the picture of the literary man bending over the tear-stained laddie and with a sixpence transforming his world, a veritable fairy prince come to the rescue.

This morning, however, my reading has taken me behind the scenes of George Gissing's life as told in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, and with something of a shock I have realised how little I understood the inwardness of the story ; for I have learnt something more about the sixpences of George Gissing.

In an alley on the west side of Tottenham Court-road the novelist once lived in a back bedroom on the top floor. But after a period he removed to the front cellar of the same building. The cellar had a stone floor ; the furniture consisted of a table, a chair, a wash-stand and a bed. The window, of course, had

never been cleaned since it had been put in ; and it received light through a flat grating in the alley above. On the filthy deal table, on which lay his Homer and his Shakespeare, the novelist plied his craft. At night, as he lay in bed, he used to hear the tramp of a posse of policemen on their way to relieve guard. Sometimes their feet sounded on the grating above his window. Why did George Gissing change his top-back-room for the cellar ? Because it made a difference of sixpence a week in the rent, and sixpence meant *two meals*. A sixpence to George Gissing was very near to the issues of life and death.

There is an old bookshop in Goodge-street near to the place where the novelist lodged. Once he came upon a book there which he coveted, a copy of Tibullus. He bought it. It cost him sixpence, and for that extravagance he had to live on bread and butter for twenty-four hours. The sixpence which would have bought him a plate of bread and meat and

vegetables at a coffee-shop in Oxford-street he had squandered in gratifying another appetite. But before the purchase was made he paced the pavement, fingering the coppers in his pocket, and eyeing the stall, while two cravings did combat within him. In his hands a sixpence had almost a sacramental meaning—sixpence for a copy of Tibullus and short rations as the penalty !

His own book, *New Grub Street*, he wrote at white heat in six weeks, toiling during that period ten hours a day and scarcely speaking to a fellow creature all the while. Sometimes he had to sell his favourite books to second-hand dealers to get the simplest food. One day he found sixpence in the street ! Let me give you his own words. Writing long afterwards about this treasure-trove, he said, "I had an exaltation which is vivid to me at this moment." A memorable exaltation about a sixpence !

And now, with this knowledge of the man,

let us look again at the story of the child and the lost sixpence. It was such a man who put his hand in his pocket and wrought sixpenny-worth of miracle. He who had such an exaltation at a sixpence found could conceive what anguish followed a sixpence lost. The man who changed his lodging for a cellar to save sixpence a week, who fasted in order that he might buy a Tibullus for sixpence—he understood what it all meant when he saw the child shedding hopeless tears over his lost treasure.

Gissing was able to be a real champion to the impoverished boy, just because of the grim knowledge of human struggle that had been his own lot. The child might have shrunk in tongue-tied shyness from a man, however kindly, who had lived only in the lap of luxury ; but with Gissing, who himself had known the travail of lost sixpences, there was swift and complete rapport. His own experience gave him the access of sympathy

into the very heart of the boy's sorrowing confidence.

As I thought over these things I reached for my Bible and turned to the Epistle to the Hebrews ; and words there seemed to shine with a new and deepened meaning : " We have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but one who was in all points tried as we are."

The tragedies of our lost sixpences are understood in all their poignancy, just because He who wore this robe of flesh and entered into all our human trials, from the vantage-ground of that experience can be our real succour in times of need.

COMPLEMENTS

“We are members one of another.”—Eph. iv. 25.

[“Member,” from Latin *membrum*, a limb.—*Oxford Dictionary*.]

COMPLEMENTS

BOTH of them had been damaged by the same shell in France. For when the hospital was bombarded she had been in the act of smoothing his pillows, and so nurse and subaltern suffered together. It was fitting, therefore, that this union in disaster should be followed by a union in happiness. In the fulness of time they became man and wife.

Their gaiety and sheer joyousness of heart were such that gloom had no chance within a hundred miles of them. Their broken health had been perfectly restored, and their exuberance for life and love and laughter made up an idyll. Yet on their wedding day the most hardened and least emotional of the guests were hard put to it to control the tide of feeling. Stony old colonels who had not

felt a lump in the throat for decades, were seen to be glaring fiercely and with tightened jaws as she, with her flower-like face, came down the church aisle on the arm of her radiant bridegroom. There was no one who did not feel the pathos of it.

A few weeks later, when they won the Mixed Doubles in the local tennis tournament, they were the most popular couple in the neighbourhood, and their victory was ungrudged even by the most disappointed of the vanquished. It was a triumph of superb eyesight and steel-like wrists. Her game was accounted on all hands more remarkable than his. As they both irradiated health and vitality and unclouded happiness, it was strange that some people on occasion grew moist-eyed when the two were near. They themselves were quite unconscious of any poignancy.

In addition to playing tennis, he kept himself fit by cross-country running, and won the county championship for the mile. There was

little that the two of them did not know about oarsmanship, and their dinghey was a familiar object on the river. As a regatta was in prospect there was always a flotilla of craft on the water, but it was on their boat that the eyes of spectators on the river bank were generally focussed.

Meantime in the more intimate things of life they found their happiness unalloyed. Sometimes they took a jaunt through Kensington Gardens, her arm linked in his ; and observant people used to smile at them—a kindly smile, changing to a flicker of pity when they had passed. Once on a broiling day in July they saw a small dog, parched with thirst, trying vainly to reach the basin of a drinking fountain. When they scooped the water down to him in their cupped hands the grateful little dog cared not a rap for the obvious irregularity. Sometimes they went to Wigmore-street concerts, and once a great soprano, acknowledging an ovation at the close

COMPLEMENTS

of a song, got the surprise of her life when she suddenly caught sight of this couple in the front row, leaning slightly towards each other, and clapping their hands rapturously with the rest.

One day a great sculptor, whom they met, made pretence of admiring her engagement ring. He was really engrossed with the exquisite shape and outline of the hand that wore it. So it befell that the next day her husband took her by appointment to the great man's studio, and the work of modelling went on apace. The visit was often repeated, and always, of course, the two went together. When the work was finished the modelling, entitled "Two Hands," took London by storm.

When he bought a two-seater both of them learnt to drive. Their handling of the wheel was perfect. No chauffeur's hands could be safer or steadier. None the less, when the hymn was sung in church one Sunday, "O

what can little hands do?" and her mother caught sight of her, singing unselfconsciously beside her husband, there was a swift gush of maternal tears.

On public occasions the two were curiously watchful of each other. Once at a drawing-room reception, when she was standing in the middle of the room in conversation with a friend, and a maid handed her a cup of tea and a plate, he was at her side in a moment and unobtrusively took the plate.

Before the Regatta Day the committee in charge of the events came to them with a certain proposal. They laughingly agreed to it. On the day itself the crowds of spectators on the river-bank went nearly mad with joy when this couple won a race. The race they won was the *Single Sculls*.

For, you see, she had lost her right arm and he his left. They had only a pair between them.

BALLADE OF KNIGHT-ERRANTRY

TRUE men and of the true noblesse
Were they who sallied forth to save
The demoiselle in dire distress
Within the monster's noisome cave,
And to the maiden would behave
With perfect faith and courtesy,
And played the man and not the knave,—
The Knights of Antient Chivalrie.

Their quest was ever to redress,
To win a ransom for the slave
And rescue captives from duress
By parley—or with sword and stave;
And fain were they at times to waive
Their rights for sake of amity,
For avarice did not deprave
The Knights of Antient Chivalrie.

We have, I trow, good cause to bless
These lords of hardihood, for they've
Bequeathed to us the good success
They won with arquebus and glaive.
Of Christ, the Perfect Knight, I crave
This boon,—that He would dower me
With all the prowess that He gave
The Knights of Antient Chivalrie.

l'Envoi.

Sirrah, if we be pure and brave,
In ages hence we too may be
To those who saunter past our grave
The Knights of Antient Chivalrie.

.....
THE SEAL AND THE PLEDGE-MONEY
.....

THE SEAL AND THE PLEDGE-MONEY

AMONG stacks of timber on the wide wharves, with black-sailed feluccas rocking in the river at the quayside, life to the small boy was an enchantment. Less than a mile from the open sea, the city which was his home, on the banks of the Cnydus, had a very paradise of dock-land, where traders clad in strange garments and jabbering strange speech, bargained and chaffered with the local merchants. Those stacks of timber were a wonderland for hide-and-seek, and when limbs grew tired, there were nooks among the piled logs, and eyries high up on the bales of merchandise, from which the young adventurers could watch the traffic of the wharf. Loggers floated downstream on their rafts, and lumbermen in their barges ; and sometimes close beside the hidden

audience, deals in timber would be struck and the ceremonial of bargain and barter enacted beneath their very eyes.

Here, look you, is a buyer ready for a big deal in timber that has been floated down from the distant forests. The fragrant wood lies piled in lots along the wharf. The consignment will cost a pretty figure, far more than the wary buyer has brought with him in cash. None the less, a bargain can be struck on the strength of an earnest. A fraction of the whole cost is paid over, the residue to be settled later; and that pledge-money gives finality to the bargain. No rival merchant by bidding more can wrest the purchase from the buyer. The deposit makes it his beyond all cavil.

But the timber that has been bought will need to lie for many a day before it can be used in joinery or workshop. It must be seasoned until all the warp and shrinkage have gone from it. And so the owner sets his

seal upon the timbers, branding them with his private mark, and thereafter whether they lie on the wharf, or be floated downstream to another port, that token will be respected by all loggers, and the wood that bears it will be acknowledged as his property.

So the small boy who has been listening all agog to the transaction, has been initiated into two customs of the wharfinger—the earnest and the seal. Years later that small boy wrote letters to the churches, and two remarks of his are strangely meaningful. To the folk at Corinth he said—“God hath also sealed us and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts,” and to Ephesus he wrote—“Ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance.” These words have all the vividness of a childhood’s scene. Paul was recalling the wharf and those beloved timber-stacks, and the ceremonial of seal and earnest.

1. God hath sealed us, he says, as the

trader set his mark upon the timber on the wharf. There is that within us and upon us that proclaims us unchallengeably God's. Our moral sense is token of our ownership. We have the imprint of the Eternal to safeguard and cherish. Each one of us holds office under the Crown as Keeper of the Privy Seal. God has sealed us, with a distinctive mark, even as the man on the quay sets his seal upon the timber. That seal is needed because as yet the owner cannot wholly take it to himself. A period must elapse while the wood is being seasoned. So many of the enigmas of life disappear once we can think of it as a period in which warp and shrinkage may be lived down, until we are ready at last for God's higher workmanship. And through all this period of probation the divine seal is upon us.

2. But Paul in his letters to Corinth and Ephesus speaks not only of the seal but of the earnest, the sum of money paid over as

a token of good faith that the full liability will be met.

This is an institution of commerce which may be traced in many parts of the world. The Greek word that Paul used was borrowed from the Phœnicians who were, *par excellence*, the traders of the ancient world. We know that in the first century of the Christian Church the word was in common usage as a business term. Documents of the period have been dug up in the deserts of late years, and among papers found in the city of Oxyrhynchus there is a letter of the first century in which the writer, one Horus, says: "As regards Lampon the mousecatcher, I gave him, as earnest-money on your account, eight drachmas to catch the mice while they are with young." The word here is Paul's word.

We have another letter from the mayor of a village to one, Aurelius Theon, who seems to have had an entertainment bureau. The writer is arranging for the hire of two dancing-girls

for a forthcoming festival. He suggests that they should receive "By way of hire 36 drachmas daily, and by way of payment for the whole period three artabas of wheat and 15 couples of delicacies, and for their conveyance down and back again, three asses. And of this they have received . . . drachmas by way of earnest-money, to be reckoned by you in the price." Here again the word used is Paul's word. Strangely enough, this same word that Paul used appears in Modern Greek with a different meaning. The participle of the verb is used to mean a betrothed girl, and the noun formed from the verb means an engagement ring. But the root-meaning is still there, for the ring is a pledge and token of the goods with which the donor will endow her, when the wedding has taken place, and so in Modern Greek an engaged girl is "one who has received an earnest." Exactly the same word-history may be traced in English also. Wycliffe's translation of the passage in

Corinthians is "a wedde of the spirit." To *wed* was first of all simply to make a pledge. Anything given as a pledge was called a wedde. Then the word came to be applied to a certain specially momentous pledge, and to *wed* came to mean to marry.

Similarly, in Scotch we have the term "arles," used especially of the earnest-money paid to an employee at the moment of his being engaged, as a pledge of the wages that he will receive at the end of his first period of service. In *Redgauntlet* Scott says, "He had refused the devil's arles"; in *The Abbot*, "Catharine broke up housekeeping before you had taken arles in her service."

So in Phœnicia, Egypt, Greece, and in modern countries too, we find traces of the "earnest." It was a familiar and a widespread institution. And this idea St. Paul takes and applies to the great theme under treatment. In the gift of the Holy Spirit, he says, God has given us something as arles, as earnest-

THE SEAL AND THE PLEDGE-MONEY

money. It is the instalment from the greater inheritance which will one day be ours, a fore-taste of the greater riches from His treasury. If you will, it is the betrothal ring, which is pledge of the coming union.

So St. Paul, recalling from his early days the traffic on the quayside, says that the Spirit is at once the seal and the pledge-money that make us eternally God's.

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THE PAGEANT AND THE CENSER SWINGER
.....

“Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish : to the one we are the savour of death unto death and the other the savour of life unto life.”—2 Cor. ii. 14-16.

THE PAGEANT AND THE CENSER SWINGER

IN the ancient world one of the most stirring and spectacular events was the Roman triumph accorded to the victor on the battlefield. When the hero who had won renown in some struggle for the empire, returned to the city, his entry became a pageant. Riding in a chariot, he made his way amid the plaudits of the crowd along the Via Sacra, up the slope of the Capitol to the Temple of Jupiter that crowned its summit. Behind him marched his troops bearing the spoils of victory; around him, chained to his chariot wheels came the captives who had bitten the dust in battle. Garlands and showers of petals were rained upon him from open windows, and the fragrance of crushed flowers was upon the breeze. But the perfume that was strongest came from the

censers that were carried by acolytes in the triumphal train. As these censers swung from side to side, their fragrance was wafted abroad, and the streets were redolent with its sweetness. To the hero and to all the patriots of Rome, that perfume was thrice blessed ; but to the vanquished, those captives to whom journey's end would mean the headsman's block, that same perfume was nauseous with the savour of death.

Now in one of his letters to the people at Corinth Paul was recounting some of his recent journeys with the evangel. He had been to Troas where he had found an open door ; thence to Macedonia, where he had given the gospel to Europe. His tour had been like a triumphal progress, in which not he but his Master had been the central figure. It is such a metaphor that he uses ; indeed it is the technical term for the public pageant that he employs. *Thanks be to God*, he says, *which always causeth us to triumph in Christ.*

God makes Paul's life a constant pageant for Christ. Christ, as it were, is in the triumphal car, and near the chariot walks Paul exultingly in the procession. To take part in such a pageant is a privilege for which thanks should be made to God. Thanks be to God, he says, Who through Christ the victor makes my life a constant pageant !

Now in this triumphal procession what function did the loyal and jubilant Paul perform ? Does he not tell us ? *He maketh manifest savour of His knowledge by us in every place.* Through me, says Paul, He diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge everywhere. Paul is in the pageant as an incense-swinger diffusing the perfume abroad upon the unfettered breezes. It is his *rôle* to waft forth from his thurible the knowledge of Christ.

The knowledge of Christ, then, is like a perfume. One morning the risen Jesus built a fire of coals on the beach, and coaxed it

till it kindled. That fire did duty to warm the numbed limbs of the fishers when they came ashore, and to cook their breakfast. But to one man in the ship's company it had a far greater function, as the smell of the burning charcoal, borne on the chill morning air, recalled to him the charcoal fire that was burning in the high-priest's courtyard one night not long before. That scent was redolent to him of denial and treason and He Who tended the fire must have recalled likewise that sorrowful scene. To the fisher wading towards the shore the charcoal fumes were charged with dreadful memory and with the horror of penitence untold. But as he saw Whose hands were mending the fire, the pungency became sweetest perfume. It was the Master's beautiful way of telling Peter, in secret and without words, that He understood. The perfume of the knowledge of Christ!

Now a man who swings a censer and wafts clouds of perfume as he walks will soon

become impregnated with the same aroma. So is it not exactly what we would expect that in the next verse Paul speaks of himself as the perfume? Such a transition is a breach of literary unity only to a man who has no knowledge of life. *We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ.* That is, I have myself become infected with the fragrance of my pot-pourri. Do we not know lives that are most fitly described as fragrant, that are sweet and fresh and healthful as a bush of lavender? Well, here is the secret of that subtle perfume. He who lives with the fragrance will catch something of it on his garments.

Finally, Paul has one other thought about the pageant. Behind the chariot came the warriors who had fought and helped to achieve victory for Rome. They have escaped from urgent death on the battlefield, and are restored once again to life. And around the chariot wheels are captives who will be put to death after they have made sport for a

Roman holiday. That Via Sacra along which the pageant is passing is the way of them that are saved and the way of them that are perishing. To both, the perfume is all pervasive. But to the warriors behind the chariot the incense speaks of salvation and deliverance; to those around the chariot it has the odour of the charnel-house. So, says Paul, this fragrance is unto *them that are saved and them that perish; to the one the savour of death unto death and to the other the savour of life unto life.*

The same lavender that is beloved of the housewife for her linen-chest and that exhales health and perfume and freshness, is deadly to the moths that would infest it. The same perfume conduces to life or death. The man who refuses the wistfulness of God thereby confirms in himself the spirit that leads to death. To him who responds, it is life for evermore.

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ON THE WASTE PAPER BASKET

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ON THE WASTE PAPER BASKET

IT is held by some of the masters of our language that the finest English prose ever written came from the pen of Walter Pater. This being so, any canon of his art, any secret of his workmanship, which he may have revealed to the world, carries with it a certain interest, if not authority. Now, somewhere in his writings, the essayist has given us a glimpse of his method. "In literature," he says, "the true artist may be recognised by his tact of omission. All art does but consist in the removal of surplusage." Here, then, we have the secret of Pater's strong and sinewy prose. The paragraph that glows with jewelled phrases, but somehow deflects the current of the thought, the page that is beautiful in its diction but is not needful to the theme, all these redundancies

are consigned without ruth or rebate to the waste paper basket. The measure of many a writer's power is his use of that humble basket underneath his table. And so, when Lord Shaw of Dunfermline declares with glorious anticlimax, that "the greatest of all British institutions is the waste paper basket," the epigram has a wider reach of truth than may at first appear.

This trimming process, this chastening of his utterance, is perhaps the most painful process that a writer has to undergo. To bury alive the children of one's brain is a form of infanticide from which our nature shrinks. To strangle the things we have begotten and bury them in that yawning grave beneath the table, is to leave us bereft and mourning. But if the writer happen to be a teacher also, the discipline upon him is far more grievous, inasmuch as there are additional counts, on which these dream-children of his may be condemned to death. Paragraphs may have to go, not because

they are redundant, but because the people for whom they are intended cannot receive them.

In Dr. R. C. Gillie's book, *The Minister in the Modern World*, we find these words. "It takes courage to cast aside a page or two over which we have laboured. The sheets in the waste paper basket always go to one's heart, but we must always be prepared to sacrifice any part of the sermon in the interests of the congregation."

Dr. John Watson, too, known to a wider public as the novelist, Ian Maclaren, has opened his study door and let us sit beside him on a Sunday morning, as he revises his sermon, with his congregation mentally before him. "A well-turned epigram there which cost much oil; but that white-haired saint will misunderstand it. Our St. John must not be grieved. So it must go. . . . A very impressive word there of the new scientific coinage, but what will yon sempstress make of it? The big

word is omitted ; half a line in mourning ! A shrewd hit at a certain weakness, but that dear old mother, whose home is a refuge for all sorts of miseries, it is just possible that she may be hurt. Another black line in the fair manuscript ! The sermon seems to be losing at every turn in harmony, vivacity, richness, ease ; it is gaining in persuasiveness, understanding, sympathy, love ; and after that sermon has been delivered and it has passed into men's lives, the minister will thank God for every word he removed."

You see, in the minister's study, the greatest of all institutions is the waste paper basket ; and pages, mark you, may need to be consigned thither, not because they are worthless and waste, but because they err on the other side. But what a pang that solemnized restraint involves ! "The sheets in the basket always go to one's heart."

Now, in view of all this, do not certain words of Jesus come home to us with a new poignancy ?

Have you ever thought how the spirit of the Master must have been straitened by the ban of silence which he set upon himself? "I have many things to say unto you"—(about slavery, for instance?)—"but ye cannot bear them now." Never a word did He say about that social system which must have seared his soul. Was the moral passion of Jesus less strong than that of Wilberforce? Yet never a word escaped Him upon that theme which stung Wilberforce to such righteous passion. The Sermon on the Mount is a wondrous manifesto, setting forth ideals to which the world has never yet attained; but among the most impressive things about it are its silences, the pages that are left out, the truths that for the hardness of men's hearts were never uttered, the many things which He was burning to say unto them, but which they could not then receive. We shall never know, this side of Time, at what cost to the Preacher those pages from His sermons were sacrificed!

I wonder if this principle goes deeper still? From the great manuscript of God's revelation, are there not pages missing? God is for ever revealing Himself; it is His nature and His passion so to do. Yet even now there are enigmas about life and death and the Beyond, which the wisest among us cannot solve, and existence is curtained with mystery. But it is a false and foolish demand that some men make—that truth should be emblazoned on the heavens for all the world to see, and all the unknown should be done away. The missing pages in the Apocalypse of God are at once His anguish and a token of His loving-kindness. He has many things to say unto us, but it would be disastrous for us to hear them, all at once and unedited. The white light of full-orbed truth would dazzle the mortal vision. Maybe the completed revelation would be so enthralling that, having once seen it, men would be sick with longing for its attainment, and peace would be no more upon the earth. "I have

many things to say unto you, but"—(perhaps because of their sheer joyousness)—“ye cannot carry them now.” The sheets slipped in the basket and withheld from us, they are very sacraments of the divine compassion.

But of all the reasons why pages are dropped from God's manuscript, there is one which is perhaps supreme. The human intellect needs the incentive of concealment to urge it to enquiry. It is always the curtained alcove, the locked drawer, the one forbidden chamber in the castle, that engages the interest. No one is quite proof against the appeal of mystery, and all of us are apt to become strangely apathetic, once the mystery is solved. The most commonplace things become invested with romance, if only they are screened a little. It is true of knowledge, as of so much else, that man's instinct to acquire is often greater than his instinct to possess. Have you not known men who will spend lavishly in a book-shop, and bring home in triumph a pile of volumes

that will never be read? The epigram in the Book of Proverbs is passing shrewd, "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting." The acquisitive instinct impels him forth with bow and arrows, and he returns with a full bag, but thereafter the game and venison will lie where he tossed them, because the successful hunter cannot be at pains to roast them! Is not that a true picture of many a man's experience? A problem is enthralling, until you have solved it; a theme calls you forth to the quest and is not to be denied—until you have mastered it; and then that which was glamorous becomes lacklustre. The quest after knowledge is invariably more thrilling than the attainment of it. Listen to what Lessing the philosopher once said: "Did the Almighty, having in His right hand truth and, in His left, search after truth, deign to proffer me the one I might prefer, in all humility but without hesitation, I should choose search after truth." Men need the glamour

of the chase. One dare venture to suggest that if men were born omniscient, the human intellect would decay and die, and spiritual development would have no meaning. Can we not see then the wise purpose that hangs curtains about life, and entices us to quest and questioning? Are not the perplexities of life to be, in part, explained along this line? Jesus asserted quite clearly that it was so. "Nothing is hidden," He said, "save to make it more plain; nothing concealed save to bring it to light." On the things that are open you may never give a second glance; but the things that are hidden you love to bring out into the full light of scrutiny. Some natures are photographic; they are so highly sensitized that they need to be developed in the dark, for only so can the image upon them be made clear.

So, if it be the purpose of our life here to develop our many-sided personalities, to know the truth that shall make us free, to follow

on to know the Lord, to serve Him with heart and soul and strength *and mind* (you note the brief codicil which Jesus added to God's decalogue ?) it is surely consummate wisdom, as it is consummate love, to have given us the incentive of mystery. "To *follow on* to know the Lord !" We need the tally-ho in our ears, and the thrill of the view-halloo. "Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp or what's a heaven for ?"

Do not, therefore, be too hasty to condemn when you find things in creation that do not quite square with your idea of the fitness of things, that transcend your Lilliputian outlook. These things may be, if you but knew it, causes for adoration.

God has many things to say unto us which some day we shall hear ; and when we pass through the veil, shall we find, I wonder, that of all the things which betokened God's compassion, the greatest were the sheets which were held back from the full manuscript ?

.....
"THIS HOUSE TO LET FURNISHED"
.....

JESUS' PARABLE OF THE HAUNTED HOUSE.

“When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out ; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept and garnished. Then goeth he and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there : and the last state of that man is worse than the first.”—Matt. xii. 43-45.

“THIS HOUSE TO LET FURNISHED”

PICTURE to yourself an old-world mansion standing proudly amid its flower-gardens and its patriarchal cedars. In front of the loggia is a Dutch garden, sunk below the level of the lawn, with a lily-pool in the centre and carved cupids commanding the crazy paths from their pedestals. An arbour set amid a rockery looks out across a far-stretching park. You are on an estate that has a nobility all its own. Yet, in spite of this you have an unhappy feeling that all is not well. The wrought gates at the end of the drive are hanging painfully on broken hinges ; the paths are a-riot with thistle and docken ; every cupid has a broken bow or a chipped wing ; the pillared vestibule of the house is foul with rubbish ; and beyond the battered portal reigns confusion worse con-

founded. The lordly rooms are littered with dust and welter. It is as though an evil spirit were infesting the whole domain. That indeed is so, for the tenant is a beast of a man, who has allowed his leasehold to go to wrack and ruin, and whose very presence is a defilement. Men marvel at the slackness of the landlord who permits this gross despoiling of his property. But one day there is the scrunch of wheels upon the gravel; a man leaps across the rubbish in the porch; there are high words within; then in an access of righteous anger the landlord thrusts out his evil tenant, and sends him packing. We watch him with his crestfallen, hangdog look, as he slinks off and disappears into the shrubbery. At last the unclean spirit has gone out.

There come times in the history of most of us when we make up our minds that our easy moral sanction shall come to an end, and that we shall be rid once for all of the evil that has been enthralling our lives. We arrive as it

were upon ourselves in a white-hot passion for purity, and with the full authority of proprietorship we bundle forth neck-and-crop the evil habit that we have housed too long, and that in our best moments we know we loathed. In mood of high resolve we vow that never again shall that noisome figure darken the door of our soul. We revel in a new sense of freedom; we feel ourselves again to be masters of our destiny. Yet the end of the tale, despite its glad beginning may be tragedy. Jesus knew these reformatations, and knew that the last state of that man may be worse than the first.

How can that strange catastrophe come to pass?

The landlord has watched his late tenant turn with a look of untold malice and then plunge out of sight into the bushes. Thereupon he turns indoors, and with a will addresses himself to the task of restoring order out of chaos in the halls and chambers of the

house. First he sets to work with a broom and explores nooks and crannies ; he brushes across the wide floor spaces and down the stair-ways, until at length from turret to cellar the house has been swept. A new freshness begins to shimmer in the rooms as the work of cleansing goes on apace, and as the loathly tokens of the late tenant are banished.

Next the more delicate task of adornment must be undertaken. Prints that used to hang awry upon the walls are adjusted foursquare ; hangings where moth and dust have corrupted are replaced by cretonnes, and the dirty shrouds in which the suites are covered are changed for bright chintzes. Vases are filled with bright flowers from the rockery, and the scent of lavender fills the rooms upstairs. The house now has not only been swept but garnished. Does not the analogy in the Mansion of the Heart still hold ? When the unclean spirit has gone out of a man, and the man is exulting in his new freedom and the spirit of high

endeavour is strong within him, his real desire for better things impels him not to be content with having thrust out the evil tenant, but also to reform and re-beautify the dwelling. The ideal of the House Beautiful becomes a real dynamic ; he endeavours to set his house in order. The evil habits which remain as a legacy from the late occupant are ruthlessly swept out, and embellishment is attempted in the form of a careful soul-culture. By thinking upon whatsoever things are true and lovely, these things become the pictures that hang foursquare upon the walls of the soul. In this wise the soul (like the house) is swept and garnished.

With a regeneration so thorough—the unclean spirit cast out, the defilements all removed, fair and goodly things set in array within—can moral disaster be the outcome of such a beginning? Listen to the dreadful words of the epilogue—"The last state of that man is worse than the first." How can that come to pass?

“THIS HOUSE TO LET FURNISHED”

Well, let us glance again at the landlord. He looks around him upon a house that is as fair and fresh as the day. With a last glance of satisfaction upon his handiwork, he turns the key in the door, puts up a notice at the gate of the avenue, and goes his way, pathetically unaware of one fatal piece of forgetfulness. He has made no effort to find a new tenant for the abode that he has made so beautiful. The notice at the end of the drive tells in little the whole story of the coming tragedy, “This House To Let Furnished.” There are three adjectives applied to the house in the parable, “empty, swept and garnished.” It was its emptiness that proved its doom. Because it was empty, its very garnishment ministered to its undoing. For one evening in the gloaming there was a stealthy step beside the Dutch garden, and in a moment a hideous face was peering through the loggia window. Not a sound to break the stillness! Not a sign of life within the house. Then with an unholy

glee the Thing hobbles across the lawn and into the shrubbery again. The unclean spirit since his eviction has been roaming upon the moors, leading the life of a tramp across the barren wastes, searching for some shanty in which to rest. Finding none, he has said to himself: "I will return unto my house, whence I came out." On his first wary return he has found no new tenant to say him nay, and glowering through the window he has seen his old haunt trebly inviting and attractive—empty, swept and garnished. Out on the moor are seven cronies of his whom he has met on his recent wanderings, beings even more evil than himself, and back to them he has gone with the glad news of his discovery.

And now, look you, here they come, eight of them, a confederacy of horrors, hirpling along in their misshapen ugliness, nickering in ghoulish laughter, hoofing it across the flower beds, and by means that evil spirits have, they gain entry into the empty house and the

dreadful fate of the place is sealed. Scientists tell us that "Nature abhors a vacuum." That means that in the constitution of things there is always a tendency to fill up spaces, never to suffer a gap. So it is in things spiritual. If you don't see to it that in your heart and life there is a good tenant in residence, you may be sure that an evil tenant will come and take possession, because the place won't stand empty. It is a strange fact and one that reaches down to deeper truth than we wot of, that an empty house is popularly thought of as haunted. "Nature abhors a vacuum."

Clearly, then, it is not enough that a man should have his house swept and garnished. He must have it tenanted as well. That distinction is a vastly important one ; it is the distinction between morality and religion. When a man by dint of grim resolve, out of respect for the noblest in his nature, contrives to lead a life that obeys the highest dictates of his soul—that is morality ; that is having one's house

swept and garnished. But when a man is possessed by a great, if unseen, personality who becomes the grand motive-power of his life and the mainspring of his actions—that is religion ; that is having one's house tenanted. The essence of morality is a resolution ; the essence of religion is a relationship. Now at some stages of the world's history these two interests, morality and religion, ran along lines that never touched. In pagan Rome, morality was the concern of the philosopher, and religion the concern of the priest, and their spheres seldom overlapped. Why religion had no common ground with morality is easily explained. The gods of Rome's worship were themselves immoral beings. Jupiter and Mars and the rest were conceived as indulging in debauchery and vice, so that worship of the higher powers, in a word, religion, was much more akin to immorality than to morality. In many an age religion was organised beastliness, and its unholy rites were the greatest enemies that

morality had to face. Hence, Matthew Arnold's definition of religion as “morality touched by emotion” is quite beside the mark. Often enough religion has been “immorality touched by emotion.” Now part of the glory of Christianity is that with Christ these two lines, morality and religion, converged, and ever since have travelled together coincidently. On the one hand, you have a pure and commanding personality who may become the grand motive-power of a man's life, and on the other you find that personality setting such a high standard and making such moral demands as the world has never known before. The true Christian, therefore, finds morality and religion linked together. He has his house tenanted, swept and garnished. This distinction finds an apt illustration in the old classic poems. On the Isle of Sirens, according to the legend, lived a brood of fair but evil women, whose sweet singing lured the sailors on passing vessels to a dreadful fate. So when Ulysses

was cruising past the isle he lashed himself to the mast, so that he might not be enticed by the alluring voices. But there was another vessel, on which the crew moved in perfect freedom even in presence of the danger, because they had Orpheus on board, and his minstrelsy made the songs of the sirens seem as discords. Ulysses lashed to the mast—that is a picture of morality without religion, stern and rigid, in grim-eyed, jaw-locked expectation of imminent disaster. But on the vessel of the Argonauts, with the master who overcame the lesser powers—that is religion.

Now it is the verdict of experience that lashing oneself to the mast is not an expedient that works. You can't be perpetually lashed to the mast when you are sailing life's sea, and even if you were, the cords that drew you so tight become slack in lapse of time. Mere resolution does not carry a man through. Is it not a commonplace that a drunkard, after a period of rigid abstinence under the dictates

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of resolution, suffers a lapse at last that takes him to greater excesses than before? Have you not known the spendthrift, who, after a month or two of self-imposed economy, will suddenly have an outburst that costs him more than if there had been no period of restraint? In such a case the time of self-repression makes the situation worse than it would otherwise have been. There is a Jack-in-the-Box principle in man, according to which suppression will actually supply the impulse for an untimely uprising. As Jesus said: “The last state of that man is worse than the first.” The house that has been cleared of its evil tenant comes ere long to have eight evil spirits in possession. Only a power which is replaced is displaced. You need a new tenant to keep the old one at bay. Chalmers used to speak of “the expulsive power of a new affection.” The new tenant will banish the beastly shapes when they show face through the shrubbery. “Behold,” said Jesus, “I stand at the door and knock.”

.....
"THIS HOUSE TO LET FURNISHED"
.....

There is many an empty house—be it swept and garnished, or be it still, foul from a recent occupant—that would know a new era of life and peace, if He were but made its tenant.

A HYMN OF THANKSGIVING

I THANK Thee, gracious Lord, for everything
That woos my wayward heart from what is base ;
For sacraments of purity that bring
New zest for healthful life, new stores of grace.

I thank Thee for the lives of saintly men
That shew the wondrous scope of human love ;
Who make their lives a chivalry and then
Wing home to Heaven like the homing dove.

I thank Thee for the wind upon the heath,
For moments on the mount alone with Thee,
And for Thy petalled poems underneath
The meadow hedgerow and the greenwood tree.

I thank Thee for the thrush's song at eve
With all its gay rebuke of our despair ;
For organ-tones that reach the heart and leave
Divine appeals reverberating there.

For colour, and for every tint that shows
Upon Thy sunset canvas in the west ;
I thank Thee for the whiteness of the rose
And for the orange on the robin's breast ;

And for the look in little children's eyes,
For all the sinless beauty mirrored there ;
And for those peerless vespers that arise
When they kneel down to sing their evening prayer.

Such are Thy wistful ministries that steal
O'er hearts that else might falter overmuch ;
O make my heart respond to their appeal
And thrill to nobler purpose at their touch.

SAUCE FOR THE GANDER

“Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.”—Matt. vii. 12.

SAUCE FOR THE GANDER

THE postman put two letters into the hands of the rosy-cheeked housemaid who answered the door. Then he raised his cap courteously, as he called a cheery good-night. For there was something in Margaret that unconsciously evoked chivalry and courtesy from even the most lubberly of the tradespeople, and ladies of breeding among the habitual callers had been known to speak a kindly personal word as she conducted them to the drawing-room.

Maybe they divined that she was often homesick. For Margaret was one of those who pay the penalty for being too efficient. She could never be spared by her reliant mistress for long enough to enable her to have a holiday at home.

As she glanced at the letters her face

lightened. One of them, which was addressed to herself, bore the postmark of a little Highland village in the far north of Scotland. The envelope had that strangely intimate and familiar look that puts "letters from home" into a category by themselves. She took the other letter to the drawing-room before settling down to the sheer luxury of her mother's weekly epistle.

In the drawing-room a girl was poring over an atlas. As she had lately graduated, her engrossment bore no relation to forthcoming exams. It was begotten of spontaneous interest. She flushed red as she picked up the letter from the salver on which it was handed, and her fingers quivered while she tore the flap. The lady at the piano was strumming a new waltz tune, and failed therefore to observe her daughter's agitation. ". . . As the report from the doctor in regard to your medical examination is entirely satisfactory, and as the committee has received your offer with great thankfulness and enthusiasm, there is no obstacle

to your beginning your work as soon as your own plans make that practicable. . . .”

The girl closed the atlas and glanced towards the piano. The task she had so long dreaded was now awaiting her, and the ordeal must be faced. Hitherto she had not been certain that her offer would be accepted, and it would have been foolish to precipitate a “scene” with her mother, which might afterwards prove to have been unnecessary. But now the hope she had hardly dared to dwell on had been realised. The letter in her hand had brought heart’s desire within measurable distance. With real anxiety about the pang she was now to cause, but with her mind steeled to carry through her duty, she moved over to the piano.

“Mother, I’ve been accepted for service as a missionary in China.”

Below stairs the girl was reading her letter by the kitchen fire. “. . . Yesterday afternoon I walked to the end of the glen, though it’s a bitty further than my old legs will carry me

now without getting tired. But Jock wanted the outing, and as he's the faithful companion of my nights and days, what else could I do? He roamed all along the brink of the burn, and yelped with delight now and then, to let me know how much he was enjoying it, and his tail was poised at that especial angle he keeps for great occasions! O lassie, the primroses are all out on that bank beside the waterfall! How you would love it! I mind the last time we were there together, and you picked a posy for me. You were but a chit of a girl then, with your hair about your shoulders. . . ."

A bell rang suddenly with unusual vehemence, for in the drawing-room the indignant lady was closing her tirade.

"The whole thing is wicked and most unnatural. Mothers ought not to have to give up their daughters, and have them banished for years at a time."

Margaret entered quietly with the supper-tray.

ON HELP BY DESERTION

ON HELP BY DESERTION

THERE are some people in this life of ours who may help us best by making themselves scarce. The scoundrel and the bore do us maximum service when they leave us. But of dear and trusted friends, whose very presence is a benison and in whose hearts is nothing but kindness towards us—it can never surely be true of them that they help us by going away? Such a thought is discountenanced by all our language. The word *succour* means really “to run up to” ; the word *assist* means “to stand close to.” We have no words which embody the thought of help as “going away.” Yet in our strangely complex life it is sometimes true that our most valued friends, wishing nothing in life so much as to help us,

ON HELP BY DESERTION

achieve their purpose best by going away. You can think of such cases ?

In one of his poems Tennyson pictures a man standing in the darkness outside a lighted window—"the ruddy square of comfortable light"—and peering in at a scene of happy life around the fireside. He was a sailor who had been missing for many a year, shipwrecked on a desert island from which at last a passing vessel had rescued him ; and now he was back at the harbour-village that was his home. The woman whom he saw through the window was his wife ; the children, grown now almost beyond recognition, were *his* children, and the man at the inglenook was an old-time suitor for the hand of his bride. For she, thinking her first love long since dead, had married his rival ; and it was upon a scene of warmth and peace and happiness that the homecomer looked in. Noiselessly, he turned away, tiptoeing lest the shingle should crunch underfoot. As quietly as one closes the door of a sick-room,

he closed the gate, and made for the wilderness. Help me, he prayed, not to break in upon her peace. Did not Enoch Arden as he stumbled away from the dwelling where he had such good right to be, prove himself the lealest friend to his wife and children ?

The paradox is sometimes true ; the strange web of circumstance may make absconding the finest form of help.

Here is a far different scene. Away out in the land of the white silences a little party dogged by disaster is making a dash for safety. But one of its members has fallen lame with frostbite and become dreadfully weak. He cannot make the pace with the others ; he is taking his share of food from the rapidly thinning stores, but he cannot take his turn of pulling at the sledges. The truth forces itself upon him that he is becoming a drag upon his comrades. One night when he was very near the end he lay down in his sleeping-bag, hoping that he might never wake ; but

the morning dawned and found him still conscious. Outside it was blowing a blizzard. He tottered over to the tent-flap. "I am just going outside and may be some time," he said ; and then he disappeared head down into the blinding storm.

As Captain Oates took the last lonely trek across the icfield, was he not reaffirming this same truth ? The staunch comrade over many a mile of snow, to the end serving the party to the limit of his weakening endeavour, strove at the last to give them still his best service. In his view that purpose was best achieved by taking French leave into the blizzard that was already preparing his white winding-sheet. And history, looking upon that deed, has acclaimed him as a very gallant gentleman.

Is there not a principle here—that a man may often serve his fellows best by leaving them ? Maybe it is answered that the instances quoted arose from sheer freaks of fortune ; that the circumstances of Captain Oates and

Enoch Arden are never paralleled in ordinary life. These instances, it may be urged, belong to the accidents of life and are not of its essence, so that "help by desertion" is not a principle of life, but a rare jest of circumstance. Well, let us look at things a little more closely, and maybe we shall find that this is an inescapable principle of life, affecting each one of us.

Can you recall your first day at school—that early plunge into the adventure of life? How you were taken to a building that seemed overwhelming in its vastness, and were ushered into a study where sat a personage in cap and gown that held you spellbound? You were invited to sit down on an armchair, upholstered in that slippery leather, on which a person with short legs cannot, by any access of skill, get a secure seat; and finally you compromised with a half-standing posture while your father cracked jokes with the Head about Greek particles. By and by—well, you know

what happened. Your father shook hands with you and left you with that overwhelming personage, left you unprotected in a vast and unfamiliar country.

And now maybe, after the lapse of years, you have an inkling of what your father was thinking, as the train went swiftly back to town that day. In order that the wholesome discipline of school might have unhindered scope ; that the teachers should be able to give us of their best ; that we ourselves might put life to the touch and hazard ourselves without prop or protection, our parents steeled themselves to leave us. That discipline—the removal of bulwarks on which we have leaned—comes to every man and woman in the normal course of things ; and the advantage that lies in their removal is to be measured by their earlier strength as bulwarks. It is surely true, as a principle, that the supremest service may lie in desertion.

Indeed, our Lord Himself set His seal

upon this principle when He said, "It is expedient for you that I go away." It is a strange fact, and one that we would shrink from uttering if our Lord Himself had not affirmed it, that it was a gain to His disciples when He left them. He meant that they would never achieve the best that was in them, or bring their powers full circle, as long as He was by their side, in the flesh. On Him they had learned to lean and to rely; they never made assay of their full strength until He was withdrawn from sight and touch. In a sense, of course, He was to be with them always, and the withdrawal of His physical presence was to make possible a more spiritual communion. But departure in the literal sense, as men understand departure, was necessary for their well-being.

The Christian Church received its great dynamic and became a power that has defied the assaults of time, because Jesus, who had nursed and tutored the founders of the faith,

ON HELP BY DESERTION

in due time took His leave of them, and a little wistfully, with a smile like our father's in the Head's study, said to them, "It is expedient for you that I go away." It was a great venture of faith ; it was a great tribute to the group of fishermen and excisemen that the great charge was committed to them to carry on without their Master. The Church had its foundations laid deep and strong as a result. It was succour by desertion—which is a contradiction in terms, but a statement of reality !

We have found that the principle takes us deeper into life than perhaps we fancied, and now we may find that it actually goes to the lowest deeps, and touches rock-bottom. For these words of the Master's hold a philosophy of life that works out and is satisfying.

In the eternal life, as in this fleeting physical life, we needs must have our schooling. Beings with moral natures must win their souls by conflict and choice between good and

evil. And so the Father of our spirits sends us here to school. When a spirit is born upon this earth in its robe of flesh, we might hear, if our ears were more attuned, a Voice which says, "It is expedient for you that I go away." He brings us to the threshold of life, and then from sight and touch, though not from fellowship, our Father withdraws Himself, leaving us to the high adventure of life at school, that so in the hereafter we may be equipped for true companionship with Him.

Here is a challenge to the chivalrous within us. For He is watching how we acquit ourselves, how we play the game, at school.

THE DAY'S ROUND

At morning dawn I whisper by my bed,
With Him who had not where to lay His head.

At noon-day 'mid the city toil and fret
I walk awhile with One on Olivet.

At set of sun I keep a secret tryst
With the Lord Christ.—

And all the world seems fair
And life is debonair.

.....
ON INSPIRED ANACHRONISMS
.....

ON INSPIRED ANACHRONISMS

IN one of the most delightful autobiographies of our time the writer recalls a very early memory in which a grocer of his fond acquaintance—for he was a donor of walnuts—was the outstanding figure. The grocer's name was Mr. George Sampson, and to his shop the small boy was hurrying one day on an errand of breathless importance. To this hour he can hear again the tinkling of the door-bell, as he pushed his way in. The customers seemed to make way for him. The top of his head did not reach much above the counter, but he stopped business none-the-less with this demand, "Please Mr. Sampson, are you the gentleman who carried away the gates of Gaza on his back?"

It is one of the traits of the child mind that it lacks a sense of the perspective of history.

.....
ON INSPIRED ANACHRONISMS
.....

It is not yet sensitive to focus. Samson, the giant of the days of the Hebrew judges, appears upon the same plane of time as the grocer at the store who makes largesse of walnuts.

It is not, however, only the child mind that is guilty of anachronism. As lately as 1919 some bewildered postal officials had to deal with a letter addressed to Ludwig Beethoven. It was duly delivered at the address given, but needless to tell, did not reach its addressee.

It came back to the post-office, bearing on the envelope these words, scribbled by the postman, "A Ludwig Beethoven lived here ninety-two years ago, but died in 1827." In due course the letter was officially opened. It read as follows :—

"VIENNA, Nov. 12th, 1919.

"MOST HONOURABLE HERR PROFESSOR,—

"I should be glad to know whether you would be willing to prepare my daughter aged sixteen years for the Opera. I like your works and have the fullest confidence in you.

“I will pay you whatever you care to ask, for I am very rich and able to offer you as much as 200 kronen per lesson. Will you be able to accept my offer? As I am going on a journey to-day, I beg that you will reply by letter.

“Yours respectfully,

“_____.”

But even the scholar, as well as the child and the parvenu, sometimes takes liberties with time. Literature abounds in examples, some of which arose perhaps unwittingly, though quite as many must have come into being of set purpose for the sake of their dramatic value.

In *Troilus and Cressida*, for example, Shakespeare makes Agamemnon quote Aristotle, who of course did not live till centuries after the dim days of Agamemnon.

Similarly, Sir Walter Scott in *Kenilworth* makes one of his characters quote from the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, although that play

had not been written at the period in which the story of Kenilworth is set. Virgil makes Dido, Queen of Carthage, converse in familiar terms with Aeneas, although actually 300 years lay between the two. Up to the time of Voltaire it was customary for Alexander the Great to appear on the stage in France in the full costume of Louis Quatorze.

Raphael in his pictures paints the Virgin Mary in the garb of a mediæval Italian peasant; and have we not in London statues of modern British statesmen clad in Roman togas? Shakespeare in his *Julius Cæsar* makes Cassius say "The clock hath stricken three," though it is quite certain that striking clocks did not disturb the peace in Cæsar's time. Similarly, Schiller in his *Piccolomini* introduced a lightning conductor, although at the time of the story the lightning conductor had not been invented. For the purposes of his romance Scott in *Quentin Durward* dates the murder of the Bishop of Liège in 1468, though that tragic

event, as Scott himself explains in a footnote, did not take place till fifteen years later.

History records that there were two distinct battles of Philippi, with an interval of twenty days between each, and that Brutus fell at the one battle and Cassius at the other ; but Shakespeare in his *Julius Cæsar* combines the two incidents and makes both conspirators fall at the same battle. By a similar process of telescoping he combines in one day the murder of Cæsar, the reading of the will, Antony's funeral oration and the arrival of Octavius at Rome, though the witness of history is that these events were spread over two months.

These anachronisms, however far they may be justified on dramatic and artistic grounds, are nevertheless errors ; they are misstatements of fact. But there are anachronisms, which are infinitely more daring than any of these and which yet embody sublime and unchallengeable truth.

In the great "Faith Chapter" in the Epistle

to the Hebrews the writer includes within the galaxy of heroes the majestic figure of Moses. He recounts his exploits amid the treasures of Egypt and the barrenness of the desert, his moral triumphs in the palace and on the trek. It is a noble panegyric. But among these clear-etched sentences there is one that assails the reason by its daring and its seeming absurdity. Surely no writer in sober earnest was ever guilty of anachronism more violent than this. Fourteen hundred years, and more, lay between the times of Moses and that night at Bethlehem that ushered in so quietly the new era. What did Moses know of Christ, Who for a brief span of three and thirty years wore this robe of flesh upon the earth, centuries after the pyramids had begun to grow hoary? Fourteen hundred years! It is the period that lies between Virgil and Chaucer. Would any writer dare to credit Augustine with knowing Shakespeare, or Attila the Hun with knowing you or me? Yet it is such a span of years

that this writer quietly bridges, "Moses accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." The anachronisms of Scott and Shakespeare grow pale by the side of this.

But at least one other writer in the New Testament was equally daring. In his first letter to the Corinthians Paul was recounting some of the adventures of his forefathers in the desert. He recalls that once when they were like to die of thirst, water gushed forth unexpectedly from a hidden spring in the rocks. Further on in their journeyings when they were again in like case, the same help was granted them. It was, said Paul, as though a rock-fountain were following them through all their wanderings. Then follows an astounding remark. "That rock was Christ." We know that at a wellhead in Samaria He professed Himself able to supply living water, but Paul antedates that idea by fourteen

hundred years, and affirmed that Christ was contemporary with the sojourners in the wilderness.

With what breathless amazement the men of Corinth must have read these words that we now read with so little imagination. Jesus in the desert in the very dawn of their history, Jesus Whom some members of the Church at Corinth had seen maybe in the flesh !

A few verses lower down Paul speaks of another incident of the sojourn, how the people put the Lord to the test, trying whether sin would really be punished according to the statutes, until at last vengeance fell upon them. But Paul does not say that they tempted God. He says they tempted Christ, Christ Who, as the Corinthian Church well knew, had been crucified at Calvary but a few years before !

To the men who read this letter it must have seemed that history had lost all meaning. Time was right out of focus. It was a madman's world they were living in, if people

of their own generation could be quietly referred to as alive in the dim dawn of their nation's history. Gladstone contemporary with Hengist and Horsa!—not less outrageous must this conception have been to the bemused Corinthians. Could the madness of anachronism go further?

But strange to tell, the madness of anachronism had already gone further. For one day the very man to whom these astounding statements referred had stood in the Temple Courts, and in speech with the Pharisees had conversed about Abraham as one who knew him. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day. He saw it and was glad." Half in astonishment, half in banter, they answered, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" The answer they got was simply staggering. "Before Abraham was, I am."

Time and chronologies may separate men and make up the epochs and eras; but the Christ of history is timeless, inasmuch as that

aspect of the Godhead that reaches out to man and makes one with him is timeless and eternal. He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. The same Christ who refreshed the Israelites and against Whom the Israelites rebelled, the Christ Whose reproach the intrepid Moses bore, He it is Who to-day offers us His challenge and His succour. The power of the same Christ, at Whose day Abraham rejoiced, may be harnessed to our endeavours and be made the motive power of our lives. It is the great anachronism of Christ that is the world's hope and salvation.

ON THE PRINCIPLE OF THE PULL

ON THE PRINCIPLE OF THE PULL

HOBBS was at the wicket, and Skelding of Leicestershire was sending down hurricane deliveries that were swerving wickedly to the off. The slips were packed with fielders, waiting for the batsman to glance the ball into their hands. Astill, King, Major Fowke and Geary, their legs stretched wide apart, their hands thrust out like the pronged jaws of a snare, made the arc of a circle in the slips. In addition there was a fielder at cover, and another at deep slip near the boundary. Only one man was on the leg side, at mid-on. With deadly accuracy the bowler pitched consistently in front of the off stump, and with the field so arranged every delivery was a menace. Suddenly Hobbs stepped right across the wicket, and with a swing of his body turned

the ball to fine leg where there was no fielder. The pace of the delivery carried it easily to the boundary.

As you will know, unless you are a grossly ignorant person, this stroke by which a ball on the off is despatched to leg is called a "Pull." Strange to tell, for many years this stroke was regarded as bad form. The etiquette of batsmanship demanded that a ball bowled to the off must be played to the off. It was E. M. Grace, the brother of "W. G.," who first violated the proprieties and outraged the cricket purists. To-day the pull is not merely legitimate but orthodox—if you can do it ! To feel the slips quivering with outstretched hands, waiting for the touch that will kick up the twisting ball for a catch, and then to lunge across and turn the ball to the empty spaces at square-leg is among the few really exquisite pleasures that life holds for man !

It often happens amid the challenge of circumstance that people who are beset with

handicaps will contrive by sheer skill to cancel and counteract them. To make adverse conditions as though they were not, is a great triumph. To face the things that would hamper us and deal with them in such a way as to annul their effect is an achievement of which a man may well be proud. But, clearly, it is a higher order of achievement if one can turn handicaps to positive advantage—if not content with neutralising adverse conditions one makes them minister to actual gain—if instead of merely smothering the ball that is snaking into the slips, we can turn it to the on-boundary for four ! Herein is the principle of the pull.

A blot has fallen on the fair manuscript on which the old monk has betowed the labour of weeks. That black blemish has ruined the beauty of the script ; his work now goes for nothing. He might neutralise the damage by erasing the blot, but the chances are that he will increase it in that most difficult process.

Instead, the wily friar conceives the blot as the pheasant-eye of a white narcissus, and round it he sketches in the petals and beneath it the stalk in its sheath of leaves. That flower-face, set unexpectedly in the lines of script, is a joy to every reader. It has enhanced the parchment. It is like coming on a Baxter print in a file of prosy documents. That genius of a monk turned his disaster to positive advantage. He was own brother to Hobbs.

A few weeks ago a small shopkeeper in the north of London found himself in great straits. The premises which he rented were in shocking repair, and he had not the wherewithal to do himself what the landlord ought to have done. Things seemed to reach rock bottom of hopelessness when the doorstep, over which the customers had to pass, crumbled away and became an eyesore. Many a man would have been more than satisfied if he could have neutralized such heavy odds against him. But this man was made of sterner stuff.

The odds against him must be turned to odds in his favour. Accordingly he had flaming placards set in the front of his premises, "This is the only shop in the neighbourhood with a worn doorstep." The public took the hint that if the traffic of customers had been such as to wear out the doorstep, the goods in the shop must be worth having. The crumbling doorstep was a very godsend. It was one of the finest advertisements in North London. That man made capital out of what seemed hopeless disaster. To bring about such a magic alchemy is part of the romance and the genius of endeavour. It is pulling the ball instead of tamely patting it.

You can trace the same achievement in the great imperialisms of history. When the Romans were building an empire whose confines reached out to the farthest corners of the civilized world, it was this method that they employed. Menace was made to yield gain, and help was got from handicap. On the

borders of their empire were savage tribes, for ever making forays after plunder and pillage, and proving a constant source of unrest and trouble. It would have been easy to annul that difficulty, and hold the raiders in check, but that would have been a commonplace thing to do, and not so are empires built and established. Instead, they made these tribes their frontier guards, and by this skilled device turned the stream of their barbaric strength into the channels of empire.

Those who have a sanctified cunning in dealing with the young adopt the same plan. That ne'er-do-weel young rascal who is the despair of all who are set over him—you can, by a bulldog watchfulness, keep his villainy suppressed. But the good teacher is not content with that. Ere long you find that he has made the madcap his monitor, and by that stratagem the forces that once defied law and order are become their champion. It is, I believe, a fact of natural history that the collie

who helps in shepherding the flock was once in past ages the wolf who ravaged it. That conversion is one of man's finest pull-strokes.

Perhaps the most notable examples are to be found in the story of Christian Missions. Among the Chinese, ancestor-worship is the staple of religion. Inasmuch as it is idolatrous, it has long been regarded as a stumbling-block in the path of the Gospel. But the stumbling-block has been made a stepping-stone, and Christian missionaries now regard ancestor-worship as capable of being made the finest bond and bulwark of family life. Again, one could be pardoned for thinking that cannibalism could never be the ally of Christianity, but to the wise man these unspeakable rites will yield an approach to the very heart of our faith. For the cannibal does not devour human flesh because he likes it. More often he loathes it, and his ghoulish feast is carried through amid sheer nausea. But the noble savage conceives it his duty to acquire a

ON THE PRINCIPLE OF THE PULL

maximum of soul-stuff, and according to his belief the spirit vitality of every man he eats is added to his own. Strength in this life and the next is achieved by incorporating into one's self other personalities. Clearly, if a missionary is an opportunist, he will use that idea in the savage mind as a basis for telling him of the Unseen Friend Who will dwell in us richly and Whose infinite powers, greater than those of any human, can be yoked to our own. Cannibalism is a deadly negation of Christianity, but its root principle can be made a positive aid to evangelism. Once again, in the days of the early Church, Christians found certain pagan festivals rooted in the calendar and in custom. Pagan orgies would be a menace to the Gospel, but instead of trying simply to abolish them, they slowly put into them the finer spirit and the purer thought and the kindlier feeling that Christianity breeds, and the outcome to-day is the festival of Christmas, which is among the most tender

and appealing of the sacred seasons. The wild debauch of the Roman Saturnalia has been transformed into the softening and ennobling Christmastide. Such transformation is part of the alchemy of the believer, who makes friends and allies out of the things that threaten.

Now very reverently I want to say that the greatest alchemist for turning ill into good is God Himself. He makes the wrath of men to praise Him. He turns spears into pruning hooks and swords into ploughshares. When the war is done with, to fling the spears and swords on to the rubbish-heap would be a great thing. How wistfully we yearn for even that neutral blessing! But with God that ideal is not enough. The sword that dealt death must be turned into the ploughshare that ministers to life.

At Dunkeld there is a great bastion of rock, whose summit is crowned with pines that show like lances on the skyline. Here and there is an outcropping of bare rock which shows

how steep and craggy the bluff is. Once it was quite bare of trees, and no man could scale the precipice to plant seeds on the summit. But one of the Dukes of Athole had a passion for planting trees, and one day Alexander Nasmyth, the father of the great engineer, was visiting the grounds and heard of the Duke's baulked desire. In front of the castle was an old cannon that was kept for firing salutes on great occasions. Nasmyth removed the cannon to a strategic point opposite the rock. He filled the round tin canister with pine and fir seeds and rammed it into the cannon with a charge of gunpowder. Then he fired it at the rock, the canister being smashed and the seeds scattered. It was in this way that the barren crag was made a coppice. The old cannon that had made many a pleasance a wilderness was now commandered for the reverse process.

It is not enough that sin and evil should be neutralized. God would have them turned

to positive good. That is not really an irrational transformation, for sin after all is just energy misdirected. The very energy that produces evil could if deflected into a new channel produce good. "I do not think you could be so bad a man," said Mackellar to the Master of Ballantrae, "if you had not all the machinery for being a good one." Two utterances of St. Paul crystalize this truth for us memorably. "I persecuted the Church," and "I press towards the mark for the prize of our high calling." In the Greek the word for *persecute* and the word for *press* are the same. They lie within a few verses of each other in his letter to Philippi. The very energy with which Paul was a foeman of God came to be used for God's campaigning.

We need to take heroic measures in dealing with our sin. The finest form of defence is attack. It is a great thing to annul our evil impulse. But God's purpose is not achieved until that has been turned into virtue.

THORNS

“Thorns shall it bring forth to thee.”

“Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree.”

“Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns.”

THORNS are the symbol of man's tragedy
Wherein all Nature shares ; for when the gloom
Fell upon Eden, this was Adam's doom—
“Thorns shall the cursed earth bring forth to thee” ;

And men conceived the golden age to be
A period when sweeter plants shall bloom
In place of vicious thorns, and in the room
Of briers shall come up the myrtle tree.

Thorns are the seal and sign of human woe
Yet men have hope ; for God Himself came down
And knew the keenest pangs men ever know.
At length, without acclaim, without renown,
He went to death thorn-chapleted, and so
The sign of human bane became His crown !

THE PEDLAR

THE CRY OF THE PEDLAR

“I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich ; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear ; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love I rebuke and chasten : be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold I stand at the door, and knock : if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”—The Apocalypse of St. John, iii. 18–20.

THE PEDLAR

IN the village life of an age that is long past one of the important institutions was the travelling pedlar. Tramping from hamlet to hamlet, he brought the merchandise of the far cities to the cottage doors of the peasants. In many a sequestered village the arrival of the pedlar at the cross-roads marked a red-letter day ; and household tasks at churn and still and baking board were urgent indeed that could not be dropped on the instant when the pedlar rang his bell. With what eagerness the girls picked over the fabrics and the finery that were disgorged from that wondrous pack ! How the little medicine chest was ransacked for the ointments and the cordials that the bedridden had waited for this many a day ! And that evening on the green, when the fiddlers struck up for

the dance, fair faces were flushed beyond their wont in the knowledge that the new muslins and dimity became them passing well ! Maybe in the lengthening shadows there were whispers between man and maid, and the bright eyes of her grew brighter at the mizpah-brooch or bugle-bracelet with which he told his love. And of all this enchantment the pedlar was the spring and source. He was the wizard genius of the carnival.

It is clear that Shakespeare was well aware of the pedlar's charm. When Autolycus was fain to get so near to the shepherds' hearts that he could pick their pockets, was it not as a pedlar that that engaging rascal disguised himself ? With his tawdry laces, his lawn and cambric white as driven snow, gloves as sweet as damask roses, coifs and cadisses and all the dainty trinkets that beguile a maiden's heart, no one at the feast of sheepshearing was so fêted as the bogus pedlar.

In a delightful book called *Wayside Wisdom*

a modern essayist tells of a travelling pedlar in the heart of the hop gardens. In the market square of a little township he set out his goods beneath the flare of naphtha lights that seemed to soften and transfigure all their crudities. The gawdy-patterned carpet seemed like a costly praying rug from Persia, the dyed sheepskin the hide of some rare beast, the watch, hanging from a long shining chain, the talisman of a wizard. By and by the trader began to sing the praises of his wares. The carpet was as famous as the merchant of Baghddad's ; the watch kept time as true as the forest clock ; the sheepskin had come from the Siberian steppes and would outlast a hundred home-made rugs. There was a splendid rapture in his conviction. Beside his improvised stall he seemed like a priest at the altar. He believed in himself and he believed too in the wares that he sold, for he knew that they were at least as good as anything the countryfolk could purchase in the little shops. And so his high-pitched monologue

counselling the people to buy had the ring of true enthusiasm.

Oftentimes if the pedlar was a kindly soul, he was treated more as a guest-friend than as a tradesman. There was a place for him by the inglenook on winter evenings, and at a score of supper-tables he would be royally welcome. And if perchance he were benighted and reached a village after dark, he had but to raise his voice at the cottage door, and the latch would be lifted on the instant and willing hands would be loosening the pack from his aching shoulders.

Sometimes, it may be, the talk around the fireside veered to things of which he disapproved, and in such a case he did not scruple to speak his mind. But somehow the culprit never resented the rebukes, for they were spoken more in sorrow than in anger, and so manifestly out of a tender heart.

In the villages the pedlar was a personage ! But in the great cities it was not so. There, men had little use for pedlars, seeing that all

they needed could be purchased from the shops and maybe on cheaper terms. The self-sufficing cities could afford to be disdainful about the travelling packman and his expensive cheapjacks. There was no market for his drugs and his elixirs ; the great ladies would none of the silks and muslins that the village girls had bought with such a rapture. In the city streets, the cry of the pedlar counselling the people to buy his eyesalve or his fabrics was as the voice of one crying in the wilderness.

Now such a city was Laodicea in the olden time, a flourishing commercial centre, one of the gateways of the East through which poured the stream of commerce from Ephesus and the West along the great trade-route to the Orient. It was a rich city and proud in its prosperity. Three things perhaps were outstanding among its claims to fame.

It was an important centre of finance. Its banking and its exchange were of wide repute. Once when Cicero was on his way to the East,

he took with him bank drafts to be cashed at Laodicea. Its citizens were well aware of the coin in its coffers and the bullion in the strong-rooms. Once when the city had been overthrown by an earthquake, they disdained the subsidy offered them from Rome, as they were well able to make good the damage without borrowing from their friends !

Furthermore, it was famous for its weaving, and for the fine fabrics that came from its looms. On the valley slopes around the city a breed of sheep were reared and pastured whose black glossy fleeces were made up into cloaks that were one of the cachets of fashion. To wear a cloak from Laodicea was to bear the hallmark of Bond Street.

And there was yet a third claim to fame of which Laodicea could boast, its medicine. The physicians in its medical school were pioneers in pharmacy ; they followed a new principle of their own devising in the healing of disease. Galen, one of the greatest doctors of the ancient

world, speaks of a special kind of ointment that was a product of Laodicea. There was balsam for the eyes, called "Phrygian," that was exported from the laboratories of Laodicea to all parts of the world. And these medicines were made up in small cylinders of compressed powder, the trade-name of which was Kollyrium.

Here then we have an arrogantly wealthy city, priding itself upon its bullion in the bank, upon its fashionable garments, and upon its patent emollients. For this city the glorified Christ through His prophet had a startling message !

It is as though He were appearing in the streets as a pedlar and crying His wares to the people. *I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire* (gold that has eternal currency, unlike that in the banks !) *that thou mayest be rich* (that to the bankers at Laodicea !) ; *and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed* (clothed, forsooth, in white raiment, at Laodicea, whose well-dressed women in their violet-black garments were like

a mannequin parade ! What next ? This . . .),
and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear ;
and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest
see. (A shrewd one, that, for the Academy
physicians, as the word in the Greek translated
“eyesalve” is kollyrium, the trade-name for
Laodicea’s boasted lotion-powder !)

You see, the very things on which Laodicea
prided itself were the things it most needed to
buy from the pedlar. It had its ingots in the
treasury, but it was lacking in the unsearchable
riches ; it had its black robes, but the white
robes of the redeemed were not on view at the
modistes’ ; it had its balms and its lotions, but it
lacked the eyesalve that heals the inner vision
and gives men a glimpse of the King in His
beauty. Here was a city that to outward seem-
ing was royally rich, yet the true verdict upon
it was that it was poor and naked and blind ;
and for it, as for us, there was One Who
could supply all its needs, tried gold for its
poverty, white raiment for its nakedness, eye-

THE PEDLAR

salve for its blindness. The Heavenly Chapman was at hand with His peerless wares.

But the greatest boon that He had to bestow was not on His tray or in His pack. It was the boon of His own presence as a guest-friend. For listen to His cry as it continues : *As many as I love I rebuke and chasten : be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold I stand at the door, and knock ; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with me.*

Happy is he who will lift the latch for the Pedlar.

THE REED

MY Lord, I know me for a bruised reed
That offers to the weak but sorry stay ;
Yet, as Thou hast in princely wise decreed,
The bruised reed Thou wilt forbear to break,
Nor lightly cast away.
So in Thy mercy I would have Thee take
Some part that haply is less bruis'd and bent
And set it in a tuneful instrument,
Whereon Thy lips can play,
And through it send Thy Spirit blowing free.
Perchance the reed will then make melody.

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ON THE ART OF RELIEVING TENSION
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ON THE ART OF RELIEVING TENSION

IN the House of Commons nerves were being strung almost to breaking-point. It was the day before the execution of Charles I. The warrant that was to send him to the scaffold in a few hours was lying in the Painted Chamber awaiting signatures. But some of the Commissioners who had passed sentence now seemed to quail before the awesome task of confirming it. The moment was critical. Anything in the nature of a scene at that juncture would have set free the suppressed hysteria that the crisis had engendered, and unlocked a Niagara of emotion which might have swept formal procedure over the abyss. Maybe that moment was a pivot-point in history. Suddenly a swift hand lifted a pen from the rest on the table. It was

dipped deep in the inkwell, and then drawn across the face of Henry Marten, who was one of the Commissioners. A ludicrous smear now appeared on his face. An involuntary burst of laughter arose on all sides. Tense drama was now impossible when one of the chief actors had a smudgy face. The spell was broken; men laughed and chatted freely once again. In the anti-climax squeamish signatories found an atmosphere less trying to their qualms. One man at least in that company understood the human mind and had the power of handling a crisis. Cromwell knew the art of relieving tension.

Even the most casual reader of Shakespeare must be amazed time and again at the uncanny skill with which he relieves the tension. Shakespeare knew that one may overwind men's feelings till they become like the limp coil of a broken spring, and accordingly he slackens the tension from time to time in order that he may tighten it yet further in a moment.

That night when Duncan is murdered, and Macbeth and his lady come and go before us with blood-dabbled hands, the strain of feeling is almost unbearable. Anon comes that dreadful knocking at the castle-gate, a knocking that seems like the pursuing furies started on their vengeance, and the heart grows almost numb with foreboding. But just at that point what does Shakespeare do? He shows us the drunken porter gibbering in his besotted sleep, and in his fuddlement dreaming of portering at the gates of hell. None but a master could be so daring without catastrophe. A minor playwright doing the same would only commit a bathos.

So too in actual life, men and women who have the tact and the delicate power of relieving tense situations are among the great benefactors of society; they are often the saviours of its happiness. No doubt we have all sat in assemblies where men have been desperately in earnest; feelings begin to run high; every instant the air grows more

electric ; in their keenness speakers will be saying in a moment things they will regret when their zest has cooled ; they need to be saved from themselves. Then just at the right moment a brilliant epigram rings out with ludicrous effect, and in the roar of laughter the tension is relieved and the zealots are sane again.

Who can tell what tragic quarrels and bitter-
nesses are averted by the man who has the
rare art of relieving a dangerous tension ?
Such a man was Bishop Blomfield of Col-
chester. On one occasion a cleric in his diocese
was charged with what the accuser deemed a
very serious offence. It seems that in his
ritualistic ardour he had kissed his stole, and
this puritan who lacked a sense of humour
had reported the matter to the bishop. It
was an absurd situation ; yet from such an
incident a whole warfare on the subject of
ritual and ceremonial might have been started.
The bishop looked very grave. "I hardly

know what to do with a man who has kissed a stole. Now if he had stolen a kiss . . .” and at once the ridiculous arraignment was laughed out of court. Students of Euclid are familiar with the *reductio ad absurdum*. That process is infinitely more invaluable in life.

In affairs of State and amid the stormy whimsies of politics it has achieved untold blessings. The other day in the house of a man who is a well-known figure in public life I had in my hand a piece of old oak whose fibres are wrenched and twisted. It was torn from a bench in the House of Commons during a riot over the Home Rule Bill in the early 'eighties. The House had gone into committee and as the debate proceeded, the fiery passion of the Irish members had been kindled, and they stampeded over the seats in an ugly rush, smashing the woodwork in their onset. The House became a scene of chaos; members actually came to blows and blood was shed; the Speaker was hurriedly sent for. It was

Peel who had in those days the delicate task of ruling the nation's deliberative council. He took in the situation, grimly surveying the seething battlefield. Then he solemnly said, "We shall proceed with the Orders of the Day." Sir Francis Palgrave (the compiler of *The Golden Treasury*) then rose as Clerk of the House, and announced the next item of business. "The Pistols Bill." The tumult hushed, and then in a moment broke out again in peals of ungovernable laughter. The irony of the position was too much for the gravity even of inflamed tempers. The Bill on the paper was a measure to prevent young people from obtaining firearms; and now a body of men thirsting for each other's gore was to deal with such legislation! Men went out into the lobbies guffawing, who might have been making them run blood but for that happy juxtaposition of anomalies. An hour that might have been fraught with tragedy ended with quip and jest about the use of pistols in

the hands of those too young to be entrusted with them !

Nevertheless, there is another side to the shield. For all its value, this faculty of relieving tension is one which is beset with great perils. For while it may often avert disasters, it may as often fend off blessings. Sometimes in a conversation have you not had the feeling that you are getting near to the great elemental things of life and truth ; that you are on the point of getting somewhere ; and that in another moment you will have reached the hilltop and a new view of truth will suddenly lie before your vision ? The hour is sacramental with the hovering imminence of something memorable. Just then someone breaks in with a platitude, a remark that is void by generality, a genial commonplace that shatters the conversation at a blow. Never again can that moment with its unfulfilled rapture be recovered, never again can its mystical setting be reconstructed. It is like the snowflake

on the river, once dissolved it is gone for ever. Who can tell what damage that relieving of a sacred tension involves?

It was just such an experience that Our Lord had at the dinner-party of which we read in the tenth chapter of St. Luke. He was the guest of one of the wealthiest Pharisees in the metropolis, and the table-talk veered by and by to the subject of etiquette at dinner-parties. Our Lord had some rather straight things to say on the matter of struggling for the chief seats at the table and the feverish contest for social priority. No doubt there were some at the board whose conscience pricked them and who began to feel uneasy as the indictment went on. A vague disquiet was beginning to spoil the appetite of more than one. Soon the talk turned to freak dinner-parties, and Our Lord had a novel suggestion for the members of the Eccentric Club. Instead of inviting your wealthy neighbours who will only counterblast in a week or two by sending you a similar

invitation, ask the dustman and the scavenger and the fellow who sells matches at the street-corner and that crippled deformity who whines for alms in the gutter; ask your charwoman and the pavement artist and a dozen people from the queue at the Labour Exchange. That's the *personnel* for a really good dinner-party, because these people can't make it up to you, they can't invite you to dine with them at their dosshouse. "Thou shalt be blessed, for they cannot recompense thee."

If the guests had been uncomfortable before, that was not the word for it now. They quailed before this onset of poignant and appallingly direct criticism. They all knew themselves as so dreadfully respectable. Bond Street was written on them all. A company of people less like the poor and the maimed and the blind it would be hard to conceive. This northern prophet could be so awkwardly topical. Without being in the least discourteous, His remarks came so near home. They

seemed to lay a rebuke at the door of one's very heart. Then at the critical moment came the deliverance !

A bland blockhead, with an air of great piety, remarked, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God." Jesus' theme was not dinner-parties in the Kingdom of God ; it was dinner-parties in Jerusalem at that very hour. The reference, from being so uncomfortably local and immediate, was lifted into the safe and serene distance of the beyond. Did not the guests dart a swift glance of gratitude at the man who made this timely and shattering remark ? How pious it was, but how egregiously pointless ! Not even the most combative person (not even the obstinacy of the little cottage girl in Wordsworth's poem) could disagree with a statement so safe and proper ; and so the subject was lifted away from the claims and duties of the hour into the spacious realms of eternity, whose present constraints upon us are less pressing.

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ON THE ART OF RELIEVING TENSION
.....

There are some people who are past-masters in the art of relieving the tension on their own souls. By the fancy from a flower-bell, someone's death, a chorus ending from Euripides, God seeks to bring pressure to bear upon us. The love of Christ constraineth us—and some of us are adepts at relieving that holy tension.

TWO DISMISSALS OF CHRIST

"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man."

"They (the Gadarenes) besought Him that He would depart."

TWICE was the Lord entreated to depart ;

Once when a strangely awe-compelling sign

Of potency proclaimed Him as divine

And wrung the cry of shame from Peter's heart ;

Once when His tender exorcising art

Evoked the fears of those who herded swine,

Lest He—the Son of God—should undermine

Their trade in hogs'-flesh at the local mart !

And His response to-day is still the same.

In heaviness of heart He goes His way,

When men will none of Him because the claim

He makes on their allegiance "does not pay."

When men dismiss Him through a sense of shame

That sad behest he dares to disobey !

.....
THE TRAGEDY OF ANSWERED PRAYER
.....

THE TRAGEDY OF ANSWERED PRAYER

IN his chronicles of early Rome Livy tells the story how once the citadel was betrayed into the hands of the enemy. The army of the Sabines was in the neighbourhood, but was making no show of war. These prowling warriors, after the manner of barbaric hordes, glittered with a wealth of ornament, and on their left arms they wore heavy golden bracelets, set with precious stones. Now the governor of the Roman garrison had a daughter named Tarpeia, a vestal virgin, and she one day had gone forth to draw water for the sacrifice. Her eye, alas, was taken by the trinkets that the warlike strangers wore to such advantage. She made a secret bargain at length to open the gate of the fortress to the army, if they would give her all they wore

upon their left arms. When they entered the betrayed city, they were true to their word, too true and too faithful to the letter of it for Tarpeia. Maybe they despised her for her treachery, for as they passed her at the entering in of the gate, they threw their bracelets to her, but as they wore their shields upon the left arm, they cast these also upon her, and the traitress was crushed to death beneath their weight. Tarpeia met her end through having her plea exactly granted. Hers was the tragedy of answered prayer.

There is a strange proverb that "when the gods wish to punish us, they answer our prayers." So foolish oftentimes are man's desires that, if the higher powers were vengeful or malicious, they would only have to grant his requests in order to compass his downfall. One of the classical legends illustrated this very truth. Midas, king of Phrygia, made request of Bacchus that whatever he touched might turn to gold. When even the food that

he tried to eat turned to gold in his mouth, he besought Bacchus to revoke the favour, and so to avert the tragedy that answered prayer would certainly have brought.

Just over ten years ago a biography of that wonderful writer, Michael Fairless, was given to the world. In the preface to it the biographer recalls the fact that Michael Fairless had straitly charged her executors to abstain from revealing her identity, and that in issuing a biography they were running directly counter to her expressed wishes. But the preface goes on to state that so many garbled statements, inaccurate assertions and pure fictions had appeared about her that there was imperative need for the publication of the truth. Only one thing would have made Michael Fairless more unhappy than the dissemination of the facts about her ; and that would be the dissemination of falsehoods about her. So in the interests of the author herself her plea was disregarded. To have heeded it would have

been disastrous to her memory. By the non-fulfilment of her wishes the spirit of them was really fulfilled.

It is the tragedy of fulfilled desire that Shakespeare works out in *Macbeth*. When the toils begin to tighten around him, the regicide takes counsel again with the witches in the cave, and they tell him that he will be vanquished only when "great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill shall come against him." How often must Macbeth have prayed that this would be so, assured that the forest was fast rooted in the rocks and immovable. But when the host of Macduff was advancing on the castle they chose a strange mode of approach. Each soldier cut down a branch from Birnam Wood and marched with this leafy screen around him, so that as the host advanced, it was in very truth a moving grove, and Birnam Wood came to Dunsinane Hill. Macbeth suffered the fate he so greatly feared, and yet the terms of the witches' promise and

of his own desire were all inviolate. His, too, was the tragedy of answered prayer.

Not only in the storied past but in more recent times men have suffered signally through the fulfilment of their desires. Just over a hundred years ago the medical journal called *The Lancet* came into being, despite much suspicion and disdain on the part of the doctors. One of its early "scoops" was a report of a lecture delivered in one of the hospitals to a batch of students. Such a thing had never been heard of before, and the profession was up in arms, aghast at what might happen next. The lecturer was Dr. John Abernethy, who, with the possible exception of Sir Astley Cooper, was the greatest doctor of his day. Abernethy was inclined to look askance at *The Lancet* with its tendency to be probing into medical procedures that had hitherto been sacrosanct. The good professor, however, took as the burden of his complaint the fact that the report of his lecture was not accurate (which

no doubt was true), and declared that if his lectures were to be reported, he would like them reported accurately. Now, great doctor as he was, Abernethy had a dreadful literary style, and his lectures were full of unfinished sentences and peppered with expletives and semi-blasphemous oaths. His feelings therefore can be imagined when he found set forth in *The Lancet* a verbatim transcript of one of his lectures exactly as he delivered it, with the "egads" and much that was barely printable set forth in cold type, which remains unto this day in back files of *The Lancet*. Having his request fulfilled, Professor Abernethy was less pleased than ever! You may often do a man the greatest disservice by the simple device of granting his desires.

Now if we carry this truth into the higher reaches of the spiritual, we shall find that it holds no less there. But if we are dealing, not with the malicious gods of pagan mythology, but with a Father in Heaven revealed to us in

Jesus Christ, we shall find that many a tragedy which would accrue through the answering of our prayers, is averted by their remaining unanswered. As Shakespeare makes Menecrates say in *Antony and Cleopatra* :

“ We, ignorant of ourselves,
Beg often our own harms, which the wise powers
Deny us for our good ; so we find profit,
By losing of our prayers.”

One of the great books of all time contains the confessions of a man who in his youth showed a taste for the profligacy of his day. When still a young man he made up his mind to sail for Italy and so cast off the shackles of home. His mother, Monica, set herself to pray earnestly that he might be prevented from going. Down in a little chapel by the shore her whole soul was going forth from her lips in an agony of petition. Yet even while she prayed the ship with her son on board weighed anchor. But through that voyage he met Ambrose, under whose tutelage he became one

of the great saints of the Christian Church. If that meeting had never taken place, if Monica's prayer had been granted, it would have been sheer tragedy to Augustine and to the world. As he wrote in his Book of Reminiscences, "Thou, in the depth of Thy counsels giving ear to the purport of her desire, didst not effect what then she was asking, that Thou mightest do in me what she was ever asking."

So our Father in Heaven with His over-arching providence for mankind safeguards us from the tragedy that lies often in answered prayer. He like any father would have His children come to Him continually with prayers and pleadings, but with His wider purview and His deeper knowledge He may refrain from granting them. So the prayer of every Christian should be pervaded with the spirit of "Thy will be done," uttered not in wailing resignation as who should say "Thy will be borne," but in glad reliance upon God's higher and wiser arbitrament.

Sometimes, however, the petitioner may so set his heart upon an object and so obstinately set his face towards a certain course, that refusal is impossible even with God. When the younger son asks peremptorily for the portion of goods that falleth to him, and the call of the far country gives an urgency to his plea that it cannot be gainsaid, the father may grant the request, well knowing the tragedy that answered prayer will mean. If a nature is intractable and is resolved, come rack, come rope, upon a certain line of action, not even Almighty God dare stand in the way. For our moral freedom is the most precious thing we have, the thing that gives us kinship with the divine, and if we are so wedded to a foolish course that God could interfere only by doing violence to our right of choice, then our desires are granted and the younger son goes to the far country. A man may be so stubborn that the only way of saving him lies through the tragedy of answering his prayers. So there came to be

recorded one of the most dreadful utterances of all literature, "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their souls." Is not that the story in miniature of many a man's life, who has set himself to compass some end, in the face of all the claims that goodness and purity and mercy laid before him? He gets his desire; God grants his request; but he is wizened in his soul. That is the supreme tragedy of answered prayer.

Men often recount with thankfulness their answered prayers. Maybe if we had more eyesalve for our blindness, we should see that our unanswered prayers were themes no less for our praise. God is often most merciful when He withholds. Life and the world have a glamour by reason of the things He has denied us. A book of essays by one of the most graceful writers of our time, Robert Lynd, has a magnificent opening, which alone would give the book distinction. The opening sentence arrests and then allures. "Not to

have seen a kingfisher leaves the world full of a mysterious beauty." One fancies for a moment that the word "not" has crept in through some freak of a printer's error. For is not the kingfisher a dream of feathered loveliness, as though it had dipped its pinions in the sunset? Yet, says the essayist, *not* to have seen a kingfisher enhances life. As we read on we see his meaning. "There is still something to be sought for, something prettier than the North Pole, and less impossible as an object of search than the Holy Grail. Every river bank along which one wanders is rich with its unseen colours. Not a willow grows aslant a grove but might be the perch of this winged rainbow. Hence I was not melancholy that I had never seen a kingfisher save in a glass case. I felt that I was saving it up, that it decorated to-morrow. The unseen kingfisher made the mud of the stream as pretty as though it were sitting there on a bough as in an illustration." Is not that gloriously true? You have set

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your heart upon some cherished ideal, and as long as that is unachieved, every day that dawns is roseate just because it may be the day of your realised ambitions, or because it takes you one step nearer them. Every street you pass through is gay as a masquerade because it is transfigured by the potential realisation of your dreams. Your unfulfilled hopes decorate to-morrow. They impart colour and pattern and beauty to the days that lie ahead. The unknown and the unachieved give life its glamour. Every stream is bright with the colours of your kingfisher just because you have never seen them.

One of our hymns daringly sets forth this point of view.

“ Ah, a new song is in my mouth
To long-loved music set,
‘ Glory to Thee for all the grace
I have not tasted yet.

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‘ Glory to Thee for strength withheld,
For want and weakness known,
And the fear that sends me to Thy breast
For what is most my own.
I have a heritage of joy
That yet I must not see ;
But the hand that bled to make it mine
Is keeping it for me.’ ”

Is not unanswered prayer one of the greatest
blessings of life ?

THE TWIN VISIONS

"Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty ; they shall behold the land of far distances."

THE visions are twin visions ; for to all
Who once have seen a vision of the King
The lands of the far vistas seem to bring
Unvoiced appeals that capture and enthrall.
To such as see His beauty comes the call
Maybe to sally forth knight-erranting,
Or spend their hardihood in succouring
The few on whom the greater burdens fall.

Do not our eyes need focussing afresh
For distant vision ? For is not the theme
Of each enraptured prophet that all flesh
Shall see the Lord's salvation ? And the true
Imperialists of God are those who dream,
Sighting the wonder of the distant view.

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ON SHIBBOLETHS

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ON SHIBBOLETHS

DIALECT is one of the strangest phenomena of speech. Dan Crawford tells us that in his part of Africa *f* and *v* are so strictly territorial that a blind man could tell when he had crossed the Luapula River. Similarly, in the Veneto *b* becomes *v*, the *biglietti* of a Piedmontese railway station being *viglietti* at Verona. Why each district should have its own peculiar patois, differing markedly, it may be, from that of the adjoining district, is a matter for interesting speculation. In part, perhaps, dialects have arisen from the tribal marks which savage peoples adopted to distinguish clan from clan. The upper lip was slit in a variety of ways, or certain teeth were removed, rings or other ornaments were worn suspended from between the nostrils, and all these tribal badges

would affect inevitably the organs of speech. Peculiarities of intonation—a twang in tribes where the nose had been tampered with, or a lisp in tribes where teeth had been drawn—would become characteristic of certain districts. Once established, these variant dialects would be perpetuated by heredity or by unconscious imitation.

Whatever be their origin, differences in speech to-day are capable of a well-marked classification. It is this—some of them are due to actual differences in the physical formation of the vocal organs, and some are not.

The Cockney, for example, who pronounces g-o-n-e *gawn*, could, if his life were at stake, manage to pronounce it *gonn*. But that same Cockney, faced with sudden death as the penalty for failure, couldn't say "Stronach-lacher." His apparatus for speech is inadequate for such a linguistic demand ; and such differences of dialect as these, arising from actual

differences in throat and mouth formation, have marked off race from race ever since man acquired the power of speech.

Consequently, if only you select the right words, you can make speech an infallible test of nationality. If, for example, a man claims to be a Scotsman, and you try him with one of these crucial words, and he says "Hawktamuckty," his claim may be at once dismissed !

Now at least three times in history, this test, the test of speech, has been employed on critical occasions, and great massacres have taken place on the strength of its witness. Long years ago a regiment of Circassian slaves called Mamelukes were engaged in a deadly skirmish with the Arabs of the Said. In the mellay friend and foe became mingled. Then according to plan the Mamelukes challenged all-comers to say the word for "flour." "Dakik," said all who were comrades in arms, and so escaped from the raised sword. "Dagig," said the Arab and met sudden death.

Strange to tell, the position to-day is exactly reversed. The modern Mamelukes, called the Rugarugas—they are Arab ghillies—cannot pronounce “k” ; they make it “g,” just the opposite of the case in the time of the Said massacre.

Then another dreadful slaughter took place on the 31st of March, 1282, when the French in Sicily were exterminated on the basis of a speech-test. The massacre began at the hour of Sicilian Vespers, and 8000 fell beneath the sword. “Say ‘Ceci e Ciceri,’” said the Italians. “Sesi e Sisiri,” said the Frenchmen, and so betrayed themselves to death.

Thirdly, there is a well-known case in Hebrew history. For an imaginary slight upon their honour the men of Ephraim had picked a quarrel with Gilead, and had marched to battle against them. They soon had cause to rue their rashness, for the Gileadites under Jephthah smote them hip and thigh, and routed them to the brink of Jordan. In order to

regain their own camp, those of the vanquished who had by good hap survived the fight had to cross the river. Accordingly the men of Gilead, anxious in their lust for battle that none of their foemen should escape, took up position at the fords and made ready to intercept the fugitives. But now they were confronted with a delicate problem—how were they to avoid slaying their own comrades-in-arms who might wish to cross the river as well? Moreover, how were they to make sure that the enemy did not pass unscathed, disguised as Gileadites? It is child's-play on a battlefield to pick up the armour and insignia of a fallen warrior, and to pass through the enemy's lines as one of themselves. It was in this quandary that they bethought them of an acid test for distinguishing friend from foe—the test of speech.

When warriors came up and essayed to cross the river, they were accosted by the outposts. "Are you an Ephraimite?" "No." "Well,

say 'Shibboleth.' " "Sibboleth," said the man and at once had a sword through his vitals. "Shibboleth" was a hopeless test for an Ephraimite.

Now in modern English this word "shibboleth" has come to have a place in the language and to bear a specialised sense. It is used for the watchword of a society, or the test-word by which members are admitted or refused. It is used now with a certain flavour of contempt, the suggestion being that great importance is attached to trivial distinctions. The most classic case of that is Gibbon's sneer about Christendom's being rent in twain by a diphthong. In the early centuries of the Christian Church, when the creeds were being compiled, Athanasius and his party crossed swords with Arius, another bishop of the Church, and his party. The point at issue was one word in the creed. Athanasius contended for the word *homöousios* as applied to our Lord, "of the same substance" as the Father. Arius and his

followers fought for *homoiousios*, "of like substance" with the Father. The whole Church was divided into two camps by the conflict, "homousios" or "homoiousios." Christendom, said Gibbon, rent by a diphthong! The use of a shibboleth carried *ad absurdum*!

Now this is a peculiarly crooked and narrow view of things. A shibboleth admittedly has to do with a minor detail, but it has its vast importance, because that minor detail is a symptom and token of matters that are anything but trivial. The guards at the fords of Jordan did not care a whit about the correct pronunciation of initial letters. They were not linguistic purists; and they slew men by the thousand not because they mispronounced a word, but because that mispronunciation betokened to which tribe they belonged. The trivial matter of that initial "s" was a means of determining the all-important point, whether they spoke truth or falsehood who professed themselves clansmen.

So with the Arian controversy. Was it simply a hagggle over a diphthong? Why, the fundamentals of Christianity were at stake. The issue was nothing less than the divinity of our Lord. The whole essence of the Christian faith was crystallized at a convenient point in that diphthong. Carlyle, who was inclined to share Gibbon's point of view, in his later years told Froude that he saw his earlier strictures had been wrong, and that Christianity itself was at issue. If the Arians had won, he said, it would have dwindled away to a legend. Lord Morley, too, writes that the proscription of Arius and the triumph of Athanasius was an infinitely more potent thing in the history of Western mankind than the fall of the Bastille and all the principles of either the French or the American Revolution!

Great and deep and grave matters may have as their symptoms things which in themselves are trivial. Would you say that a doctor was a fool and a haggler about trifles who attached

great importance to a few blotches on the skin—if those blotches were premonitions of small-pox? The shibboleths of life may have vast moment in virtue of what they betoken. Little actions, little omissions, little lapses from strict virtue, trivial in themselves, may indicate a soul's drift away from God. For generations the test of membership in some branches of the Church has been attendance at the Lord's Table. I have heard that test violently criticised by keen young Christians as being sacramentarian and ecclesiastic, as being external and ceremonial. But the test is neither trivial nor irrelevant. If a church member is content during a period of time never once to be at his church's celebration of the Lord's Supper, that indicates a condition of heart that is alienation from Him. Members are not struck off the roll because they have failed to put in attendances, or because clerks have made a fetich of the register, but because that non-attendance argues a state of soul that has cut

its moorings from things spiritual. A shibboleth may be enough to indicate on which side of the river our camp is ; and that may mean life or death to us when we come to cross the fords.

Finally, this theme of dialect suggests one other thought. We live in a world of self-betrays. Life is so constituted that ultimate concealment is impossible. "There is nothing hid but it shall be brought to light." What we are, inevitably proclaims itself from the housetops. No man can think impurely or live deceitfully but ere long the truth is graven upon his forehead, and looking out from his eyes. Pinchbeck cannot in the end pass currency as silver. Moral realities have a trick of revealing themselves whatever they be. A man whose camp is with Ephraim may pass for a Gileadite well enough. He may wear the accoutrements and may even speak the dialect so as to pass muster. But there is ever some plaguey sibilant that at last betrays him.

There is always a temptation to try to get the freedom of both camps ; to belong to Ephraim, but to pass over the river at will into Gilead ; to be on the Lord's side, but to pay visits to the country across the water ; to be Jekyll and Hyde. It is a deadly expedient. The whole of history proclaims it so. Some night there comes the testing. " Say ' Shibboleth, ' " and with our Ephraimite tendencies that have become second nature we cannot frame to pronounce it. Grimm's Law in the spiritual sphere is inexorable.

UNPROFFERED PRAYERS

My Lord, I do not ask

For service suited to my meagre skill,

But whatsoever task

Thou dost allot to me I will fulfil ;

For in my heart I know

The needed wisdom will be granted me ;

Do Thou ordain it so,

And as my day is so my strength shall be.

My Lord, I do not plead

For special gifts and guerdons at Thy hand,

Since all my deepest need

Thou with Thy sovran view dost understand ;

As Thou alone can'st see

The claim and challenge of the coming hours,

Make me complete in Thee

And bring full-circle all my laggard powers.

My Lord, I do not pray

For power to bring to pass my cherished dreams,

For chances to display

My prowess in my own imperfect schemes.

Let me but be prepared

For all the purposes Thou dost design,

Thy passions shared,

And all my high ambitions merged in Thine.

My Lord, I do not crave

That Thou should'st make my life devoid of care,

Should'st intervene to save

My shoulders from the load they well can bear ;

For whatsoe'er befall,

—Disaster, joy, Thy swordsmite, Thy caress,—

Thy providences all

May join alike in yielding blessedness.

THE MAGISTRATE'S CUNNING

“Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.”—Matt. x. 16.

THE MAGISTRATE'S CUNNING

As the magistrate glanced from the prisoner in the dock to the plaintiff in the witness-box, he knew that here was a challenge. For these two women, neighbours in a Whitechapel alley, were not the police-court type. It was only a foolish pique that had brought the case within the sphere of the law. One of them had beaten carpets at a time when the other's washing was hanging out to dry, and after a fierce altercation they had come to blows. She who had fared the worse had summoned the other for assault. In such a case as this, imprisonment, he knew, would be iniquitous by reason of its sheer futility. It would make a criminal of a woman who with a little guidance could live a happy life as a peaceable citizen and a good neighbour.

Here, then, was the challenge, a challenge to a sane constructive helpfulness as against the negative fatuity of a sentence. Could any device avail to make these two women, now glaring across the court at each other like tigers, into friends and neighbours who would live at peace one with the other ?

He turned to the plaintiff. The pink shield that she wore with comical effect over her left eye had a rim of contusion blue surrounding it.

“Do you *want* your neighbour sent to prison ?”

The question rather nonplussed the woman in the box. She had expected that this would be settled by the magistrate, not that the onus of it would be laid upon her. There arose before her a swift concept of prison as she pictured it, and then another vision of her neighbour's kiddies playing with her own in the alley. She had thought that the law of the land, in an automatic, impersonal way, would send her neighbour to prison, but that

she herself should have to pronounce the doom and urge it was a responsibility from which she shrank.

She set her arms akimbo, and, closing her eyes momentarily to indicate a careless concession, she replied :

“No, *I* don't want 'er sent to prison.”

The answer came like a thunderbolt to the woman in the dock. She had been prepared for a truculent affirmative, uttered with a malicious spleen, such as she had had samples of lately. Now there came into her heart a swift gush of gratitude. Her emotions of relief and surprise, coupled with all the strain of the court proceedings, made her gulp softly.

The magistrate saw that his stratagem had been successful. He saw that his question had brought the woman face to face with her responsibilities as plaintiff, and that she quailed before them. He saw, too, that the sullen defendant had suddenly softened towards the

woman who had brought her to the dock. Somehow that softening must be turned to advantage before hardening processes set in again. He shot another peremptory question at the plaintiff.

“*Ought* your washing to be hanging out to dry in the alley?”

Again the woman had her confidence undermined. Strictly, of course, it was forbidden. Yet it was one of those rules so honoured in the breach as to have been practically annulled. Yet here was a technical flaw in her case. She hesitated and tugged nervously at her ragged handkerchief. Then in her embarrassment someone came to her rescue! It was the prisoner in the dock!

For she, like every other woman in her station, knew the horror of having to dry clothes indoors in the tiny living-room. To be allowed to hang them in the alley was one of the things that alone made life bearable. Everyone did it, and her sense of justice

demanded that her prosecutor should not be strictured for that. It was an irrelevance in any case.

"Oh, *I* don't mind the clothes being 'ung out," she said.

It was the turn of the plaintiff to feel a sudden reversal of feeling towards her adversary. The magistrate, watching intently, saw this access of generosity. Perhaps it was just her blackened eye that was smarting, but she wiped something away with her grimy handkerchief. That feeling of charitableness had now to be heightened and crystallized, or the stratagem might yet fail. The magistrate turned therefore to the dock.

"You know, you Whitechapel people are very inconsiderate in the times you choose to beat your carpets."

The phrasing of that remark had an almost diabolical subtlety. There was just a soupçon of class superiority in "you Whitechapel people." In the intonation of his voice he

contrived to impart a suggestion of patronage. It stung the woman in the witness-box—even more than her injured eye. It roused in her a spirit of righteous indignation. She knew well that in Whitechapel people there is as much considerateness and human sympathy as in any other class of the community. In a moment she was ready to take up the cudgels for her own people. To hear one of her own station pilloried in this superior way by one of the ruling classes roused her to an inordinate fury. All the force of her class pride was now turned to the defence of the woman who had been stigmatised. She to whom the remark had been addressed had no opportunity to answer, so swift came the torrent from the witness-box. Intensity of feeling had sent the eye-shield askew, and the black eye was now fairly visible.

“Whitechapel people are as kind and considerate as anyone else,” she blurted. “It isn’t only the likes of you, sir, as are con-

THE MAGISTRATE'S CUNNING

siderate. When I wur in the 'ospital last winter she looked after my children, saw them to school every morning, mended and cooked for 'em, and did every blessed thing as I would 'ave done it meself. Why, she could give some o' you grand folks a lesson or two in considerateness. And when I was out at work one day and my Albert cut his knee on some broken glass, she bound it up and put him to bed and went for a doctor, and wouldn't take a penny for the ointment she'd used. Us poor folks can be considerate as well as the rich. So don't you start coming it with 'you Whitechapel people' as though we was the scum o' the earth! Why, only last Sat'd'y she 'ad me in for a cup o' tea, because I wur fair beat with doing other folks' spring-cleanin'."

The situation was now Gilbertian. The prosecutor was defending the defendant. The most eloquent advocacy on the prisoner's behalf was coming from the plaintiff. The magistrate had to tense the muscles of his face

to hide his chuckling jubilation. His ruse had succeeded beyond his hopes. Now, however, that suggestion of patronage which had been designed and deliberate must be repudiated.

“My dear lady, no one knows better than I do the friendliness and splendid self-sacrifice of the people in your part of London. I was born not far from Whitechapel myself. Now regarding this matter of the carpet-beating: I am quite sure that you can come to some arrangement between you so as not to interfere with each other's convenience. So instead of sending either of you to prison, the sentence I am going to pass on you is this—that to-morrow afternoon one of you, I don't care which, shall have the other in for a cup of tea.”

Released, the one from the dock and the other from the witness-box, they met rather sheepishly in the well of the court. As the magistrate watched them, the misgiving arose within him that perhaps that suggestion of patronage and class antagonism might remain and rankle,

in spite of his demurrer. As they moved towards the door he called them back.

“By the way, I have to be in Whitechapel myself to-morrow. I’d be awfully glad of a cup of tea. Could I—look in, and join you at your tea-party?”

The women’s cheeks, flaming with pride and gratification, rendered unnecessary their spluttering assent. When they had gone the magistrate sat on in silence.

“Kensington *is* near to Whitechapel, as distances go,” he argued within himself. His reverie was broken by two figures that emerged upon his field of vision, as he gazed through the window of the court.

He must have been mistaken, of course, but it looked uncommonly like as if they were walking arm-in-arm.

“SHE, SUPPOSING HIM TO BE THE
GARDENER ”

THE napkin folded in the sepulchre,
The winding-sheet forsaken of the dead,
The Magdalene, motionless in dread,
Hailed the New-Risen as “ the gardener.”
Then the fast-fading flowers made sudden stir,
The lone narcissus raised its drooping head,
The throbbing poppy blushed a deeper red,
And all the woodland thrilled in love of her.

Even the roses of Gethsemane
Lifted their soul-sad eyes and smiled anew ;
The lilies by the Lake of Galilee,
The glades of Olivet where daisies blew,
Shook in a silent conscious ecstasy,
Knowing the random surmise to be true.

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ON THE GEOMETRY OF THE CIRCLE

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ON THE GEOMETRY OF THE CIRCLE

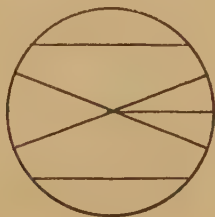
ON the top shelf of the study bookcase there is, maybe, a dusty volume called *Elementary Geometry* that you used years ago in the schoolroom. In your drawer of odds and ends, you can find perhaps a pair of compasses and a protractor, with which you once performed solemn rites on foolscap. With these relics of the past in our satchels, shall we return once more to the schoolroom and renew our youth? Perchance we shall find a gospel in Euclid.

No doubt you remember what a circle is, but if you are a little hazy about its definition, we might look it up at the outset, on that well-thumbed page next to the Axioms. "A circle is a figure bounded by one line, every point of which is at an equal distance from

a point within it called the centre." It would seem that the most essential and determinative, the most "central," thing about a circle is its centre!

Now in the jargon of theology there is a term sometimes used about our faith, "Christo-centric," which means of course "having Christ as its centre." At the very heart of our religion is not a creed or a dogma, but a person. So He who is the "Centre and soul of every sphere" shall be centre of the Perfect Circle which is to be our study.

Having noted the definition of a circle with its emphasis upon the importance of the centre, we may now turn to some propositions. First we had better draw a figure.



THEOREM I

Of all the lines that may be drawn inside a circle those which pass through the centre are the greatest.

The diameter is the longest chord in a circle. There is an infinite number of lines that you may draw from any point on the circumference to any other, but, draw you never so wisely, you cannot draw the maximum length without passing through the centre.

A man makes the most of his life, goes furthest in life, only by making it pass through the Centre. He may achieve success and win renown, but he achieves self-realisation most completely and lives life at its fullest only when it has Christ as its midmost point. For He is the very meaning of history and of human life. Men have acknowledged that it is He who makes history meaningful, that He is the watershed of time, for they count the years in relation to His birth. The veriest infidel

cannot date a letter without asserting, however unwillingly, the pre-eminence of Christ. As He is the pivot of history, so should He be in every individual life.

Once in an officers' mess I heard a famous sonata played on a gramophone. But some puckish spirit had bored a hole in the record about half-an-inch from the true centre, and adjusting it in position so, had wound up the instrument. As the disc lurched round drunkenly like an oval wheel, and as the needle swerved and side-slipped all over the surface, the effect was sheer horror. From time to time there were snatches of the lovely air, and then strident blasts of pain, as the needle was derailed again from its circular track.

How many a life runs awry and all out of tune, because it is "eccentric," off the centre. A man lives life most abundantly only in Christ.

THEOREM 2

The nearer any radius approaches to the centre, the nearer does it approach the radii on either side of it.

That is to say, if you draw your finger along the spoke of a wheel towards the hub, by the same action you draw closer to all the other spokes that are also converging upon it. The nearer a man comes to Christ, the nearer does he approach to his fellow-men. If a man love Him, he will inevitably love his brother also. One cannot catch anything of the spirit of Christ without feeling the passion arising to serve and save one's brethren. There is always a twofold approach, the nearer to the Centre, the nearer to the radii.

There is a cheap reproach levelled at Christianity from time to time, that it induces an otherworldliness in which men swoon comfortably into beatific visions and let the old world go sinning and suffering on. Mr.

Blatchford once wrote a book entitled *God and My Neighbour*. The inwardness of that title was to suggest that the two are distinct, and that the man of religion serves God, while he turns a blind eye to his neighbour. If that is ever true of Christianity, it is a spurious Christianity, for the ideal of the Christian is "God *in* My Neighbour." The Father is so perfectly identified with His children that whoso injures them touches the apple of His eye. Abou ben Adem who loved his fellow-men was found to be foremost in the list of those whom love of God had blest. The impulses of the heart, Godward and manward, are twin, and they act together. In spite of the facile criticism of the uninformed, the finest work in pity and rescue and safeguard has Christ as its dynamic. The Church, for all her faults, is the most philanthropic body in the world. There is tender work of healing and nurturing in unblazoned corners of our cities that is done by none save the fingers of the Bride of Christ.

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The nearer we get to Our Lord the nearer are we drawn to our fellows. As a radius approaches the centre, it cannot help approaching nearer to the radii beside it. It is a necessity of spiritual geometry.

THEOREM 3

There may be drawn within a circle an infinite number of diameters.

From any point on the circumference a line can be drawn through the centre. There is no point in all the round of human experience which cannot be made a starting-point to Christ. The universality of Christ is one of the hallmarks of His divinity. In Him character and experience so came full-circle that from directly opposite points on the circle of human life men may find approach to Him.

No two prophets could be less alike than Elijah and Jeremiah, the one with his thunder-bolt passion, the other "Il Penseroso." Yet

strange to tell, Jesus reminded men of both. "Some say Elias, some say Jeremias." Jesus had point of contact with all temperaments.

Again, by descent and breeding He was an aristocrat. His lineage would take up many columns in Debrett just as it covers a goodly space in Matthew and Luke. He came of one of the oldest and noblest families in the nation. There was royal blood flowing in His veins. David and Solomon were among His ancestors, and all the poetry and tenderness of that gentle lady, Ruth, was in His line of pedigree. Jesus was one Who was of noble birth. And now collaterally with that fact we have this other, that He was the son of a carpenter and toiled in a village joinery, and so for ever and a day has put the seal of dignity upon labour. In these days I fancy we would call Him a working man, a journeyman joiner. And so it is that the experience of our Master comes full-circle again—aristocrat and labourer. Thus it is that from Mayfair and Whitechapel, from

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Belgravia and from Bow, all men may reach out to Him as to life's centre. There is no mood of feeling, form of thought or cast of fortune, which cannot be made the starting-point to Him.

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